



## **URBANA PARK DISTRICT STUDY REPORT**

### **Increasing Involvement among Underrepresented Groups in Parks and Recreation Programs**

Prepared for: The Urbana Park District

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### 1. What are the recreational needs and interests of the underserved population in Urbana? Are the current activity offerings of the Urbana Park District meeting the needs of underserved constituents?

**African American non-users** have been asked what kinds of programs they would be interested in participating if their constraints on participation have been lifted or reduced. The activities and programs mentioned included: basketball, “gym,” dance, ballet, swimming, gymnastics, football and baseball.

When asked to describe activities **African American users** engaged in, the participants mentioned: soccer (youth), swimming (both indoor and outdoor), tennis, basketball (youth), baseball (youth), ballet (youth), fitness, yoga, and tap dance (youth).

**Asian non-users** represented immigrants from China, Pakistan, Iraq and Indonesia. When asked what kind of activities they would like to engage in, they mentioned walking, running, swimming and open air cooking of new (American) and traditional ethnic foods.

**Asian users** represented immigrants from China, Thailand and Indonesia. Some of them were recent immigrants (1 year in the US), while others were second generation Chinese-American. The interviewees mentioned a variety of activities they and their children engaged in: swimming (both indoor and outdoor), ballet (youth), summer camps (nature and arts), and soccer (youth). Asian users also mentioned attending various festivals in the Urbana parks, walking and enjoying nature.

**Latino non-users** interviewed in this study represented immigrants from Mexico, Chile, Peru, and one person from Puerto Rico. Asked what types of activities they would be interested in participating, Latino non-users mentioned exercising, swimming, soccer running, archery, and weaving classes.

**Latino users** listed a number of UPD programs and camps that they and their children participated in – soccer (youth and adult), swimming (youth and adult), yoga, summer arts program, and summer sports camps.

#### **What other activities people would like the UPD to offer?**

Users and non-users have been asked what kind of activities they would like the UPD to offer beyond of what is already included in the UPD programming portfolio. The suggestions included: a program for young mothers where they could share their stories and learn how to cope with stress and discuss issues related to raising children (a recommendation made by several interviewees), “wine and paint” programs for adults, cooking and baking classes (a recommendation made by several interviewees), volleyball for youth, and Latino dance classes (beyond of what is already being offered). Programs for young families and single mothers were mentioned by several interviewees. A number of interviewees recommended that the UPD provides more programs related to food, arts and activities related to health that can be done outdoors. A common perception, particularly among Asian interviewees, was

that a great proportion of the UPD programs targets families and children, while single adults are reluctant to participate in such activities. A number of Latino and Asian interviewees also stressed the importance of providing activities for a variety of age groups. A very common theme across interviewees from all three ethnic groups was a perception that the Urbana Park District does not provide enough activities targeting teenagers, particularly those who are not interested in sports. Classes related to beauty (hair, makeup, nails), skate park, self-defense, and more volunteer opportunities were mentioned as examples of activities the Park District could consider providing.

### **What are the other places where people go for recreation?**

UPD users and non-users have been asked where else, besides the UPD programs and parks, they spent their free time. Several participants, primarily African American non-users, mentioned home and church activities. Private clubs such as Charter Fitness and Planet Fitness, YMCA, and fitness facilities that belonged to apartment complexes have also been mentioned. Not surprisingly, interviewees who were UIUC graduate students frequently used campus recreation facilities such as ARC and CRCE, as well as recreation areas in the vicinity of Orchard Downs university housing units.

## **2. What are the constraints to accessing recreation programs among underserved populations in Urbana? Do those constraints differ between users and non-users?**

Users and non-users from all three ethnic groups have been asked about constraints/barriers that prevented them from using and accessing UPD programs and facilities or from enjoying their participation. The most important constraints mentioned by a number of interviewees included fees/cost, transportation, lack of knowledge of opportunities, safety, language barrier, racial tensions, lack of time /scheduling conflicts, dissatisfaction with the level of instruction and (lack of) competitiveness of the programs, and lack of programs for single adults. Some of the interviewees also mentioned constraints such as lack of room in some UPD programs / popular programs being overcrowded, and lack of child care.

Some of the constraints were highly related to people's socio-economic status (e.g., cost, lack of knowledge of opportunities, transportation), while others were culture-related (e.g., programs not competitive enough, language barrier) or associated with people's undocumented status (e.g., lack of credit cards).

African American residents of the Lierman community (in the vicinity of Brookens Gym) were significantly different from other groups of interviewees with respect to the number and strength of constraints they have experienced.

## **3. What are the benefits of participation in recreation programs offered by the Urbana Park District to the minority adults and youth?**

Interviewed program participants and parents of youth who participated in the programs have been asked "Why do you participate in programs offered by UPD (why do you sign up your children for UPD programs)?" "What do you think you and your family get out of participation in recreation programs offered by UPD?" and "When you think about signing up your children for UPD programs, what are you looking for in the programs?" The most often mentioned benefits of program participation included: an ability to interact with

children of other ethnic and racial backgrounds and to learn about other cultures; health and being active; socialization/spending time with friends and meeting new people; establishing contacts with other parents; learning the language; developing children's interests; distraction from technology; stress reduction/relaxation; safety; and child-care function of the programs.

#### **4. What are the needs, interests, and constraints related to the utilization of parks and park facilities among the underserved populations?**

UPD users and park visitors have been asked which UPD parks they and their family/children like best and why, are there things that prevent them from visiting the UPD parks and park facilities more often, and what would be their suggestions for improving UPD parks and park facilities. The most popular parks among the study participants were Meadowbrook Park and Crystal Lake Park. Study participants also visited Victory Park, Blair Park, Madera Park and Larson Park.

Urbana parks were generally considered clean although a few interviewees commented that water in the Crystal Lake Park “looked a little bit dirty.” The interviewees agreed that amenities in the UPD parks were “in generally good shape.” Parks were seen as generally safe, although a few visitors expressed concern about crime and homeless people, especially in the evening hours, and complained about the lack of lighting and the parks being “empty” (no personnel, patrols, or police presence). Signs in Meadowbrook Park were used as an example of positive park amenities. A number of interviewees compared Meadowbrook in positive terms to other parks that had no signage and where bathrooms were “difficult to find.”

Constraints on park visitation and enjoyment were classified into three categories: those related to parks themselves (e.g., cost of renting facilities, lack of bathrooms, fear of crime in the park, and problems with finding a park); personal circumstances of the interviewees (too tired, too busy, lack of time and energy, lack of cars), and of the general nature (cold Illinois weather, problems with transportation – finding a parking spot, parks surrounded by busy streets).

When asked for recommendations on what can be done to improve Urbana parks, both users and non-users mentioned making parks more visually appealing (“adding more color” by planting flowers), keeping parks open longer in the summer, installing maps at park entrances, improving lighting, increasing security of parks, providing more infrastructure for older children, and installing bathrooms in parks that lack this amenity.

#### **5. What can Urbana Park District do to better meet their needs?**

Focus group and interview participants have been asked what Urbana Park District can do to better serve their needs. The interviewees provided a number of suggestions for improvement. Most of them were geared toward helping all disfranchised residents have a better access to the UPD programs (being creative about pricing of programs, providing diversity training to coaches), while others were group-specific (e.g., lowering language barrier), or targeted towards residents of the most disfranchised communities (Lierman). The suggestions included: lower prices, offer discounted activities, and advertise the scholarships better; make applying for scholarships easier; lower the language and cultural barrier;

consider modifying the hours when the programs are offered and the facilities are opened; be clear about the goals of the programs, improve training of the summer staff; provide food stands at facilities; provide information and diversity training to coaches; improve hygiene / do not allow food into pool areas; provide more opportunities for interaction among parents; and develop an outreach program to the most disfranchised communities.

## **6. How people are finding out about the Urbana Park District and how the communication can be improved?**

### **How the users obtained the information**

Participants have been asked how they had obtained information about the UPD programs and events. They mentioned that their main sources of information included the program guide received through the mail, word of mouth, flyers brought by children from school, UPD website and facebook posts, e-mail, seeing other people participating in activities, visits to the UPD facilities, and directly calling the Park District.

### **Suggestions for improvement in marketing/communications**

Both UPD users and non-users have been asked how the UPD can improve its promotional materials and how best to reach the widest segments of African American, Asian, and Latino residents of Urbana. The participants' recommendations included: redesigning the activity guide, distributing flyers in the community (suggestion from the residents of Lierman), developing collaborations with Parkland and UIUC (distributing information through the housing office, International Student and Scholar Service, and individual departments, and organizing trips for the incoming international students and visitors to introduce them to facilities and parks), and sending e-mail reminders to the existing users to register for UPD programs.

## **7. UPD staff members' cross-cultural competence**

The UPD managers who participated in interviews have been asked "Have you had training related to serving minority users of UPD programs? Do you think you could use additional training? If so, what kind of training would you like to receive?" The majority of the interviewed managers recalled attending half-a-day long cultural competency training at the Virginia Theatre organized by the Champaign Park District. In addition, some of the staff attended sessions at the Illinois Parks and Recreation conference and at some environmental conferences. However, some interviewees stated that only about one third of the employees attend such conferences, so many have not been exposed to additional trainings.

## **8. Cooperation between the Urbana Park District and other community stakeholders**

The interviewed UPD managers have been asked "Does the UPD cooperate with other stakeholders in the Champaign-Urbana area? In response to this question, a number of formal and informal collaborations have been identified: with schools, community organizations, Child Care Resource Services (CCRS), Champaign Park District, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, local churches, Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, Carle Hospital, and Clark Lindsey Village.

## **I. Introduction**

This project, funded by a grant from the Urbana Park District, IL, examined the needs, interests, benefits, and constraints regarding the utilization of Urbana Park Districts' programs among underserved residents.

The study focused on African Americans, Latino Americans, and Asian Americans residing in Urbana, Illinois. The specific objectives of the study were to examine:

- 1. How big is the underserved population?**
  - a. How many people participate in programs organized by the Urbana Park District?
  - b. What is the racial background of participants in different types of programs and what is the racial background of the community?
- 2. What are the recreational needs and interests of the underserved population in Urbana?**
  - Are the current activity offerings of the Urbana Park District meeting the needs of underserved constituents?
  - What can Urbana Park District do to better meet their needs?
- 3. What are the constraints to accessing recreation programs among underserved populations in Urbana? Do those constraints differ between users and non-users?**

Potential constraints may include:

  - Cost
  - Feeling unwelcome in programs and facilities
    - o Racial and ethnic background of the staff
    - o Level of cultural competence among the staff
  - Activity offering
  - Ease of accessing programs
  - Fear of crime
  - Others?
- 4. What are the benefits of participation in recreation programs offered by the Urbana Park District to the minority adults and youth?**
  - What are the priorities among parents who select recreation programs for their children? What kind of benefits and characteristics of programs are they looking for when making decision about their children's participation?
- 5. What are the needs, interests, and constraints related to the utilization of parks and park facilities among the underserved populations?**
  - What types of facilities are adequately covered?
  - What types of recreational facilities are currently lacking?

**6. What is the level of cooperation between the Urbana Park District and other community stakeholders (e.g., school districts, faith-based organizations, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, police department, Champaign County Community Coalition)?**

- Is there anything that can be done to improve those collaborations?
- What are the best strategies for building community coalitions to serve the minority constituents?

## **II. Community Profile**

According to the 2011-2015 American Community Survey, the population of Urbana is 42,311. The population has grown 2% since 2010. The percent of persons under 18 years is 12.6% and there is an average of 2.24 persons per household. The percent of people with a disability, under the age of 65, is 5.2%.

The median household income is \$32,105, with 34.5% of persons living in poverty. The percent of high school graduates or higher is 93.9% and the percent with a bachelor's degree of higher (for persons age 25 years or older) is 54.6%. The percent of persons without health insurance is 7.4%.

The racial/ethnic background of Urbana is 57.7% White alone (not Hispanic or Latino), 16.3% Black or African American alone, 0.3% American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 17.8% Asian alone, and 5.2% Hispanic or Latino. Since 2000, the percentages for Black or African Americans and Hispanic or Latino has *increased* by approximately 2% whereas the percentage of Whites *decreased* by over 7%. 19.4% of the Urbana population is foreign-born.

The population per square mile is 3,539.6 and the land area in miles is 11.65. The mean travel time to work for residents over 16 year is 15 minutes.

## **III. Methods**

For the purposes of this study, “users” were considered those Urbana residents who used the Urbana Park District facilities/parks and/or participated in its programs whereas “non-users” were defined as those who did not participate in any programs and did not visit any of the facilities or parks on a regular basis. Focus groups and interviews were conducted with African American, Latino, and Asian users and non-users. Additionally, five focus groups and interviews were conducted with the recreation managers of the Urbana Park District. All data collection occurred between October 2016 and January 2017.



### **Focus groups with the UPD managers and staff**

Prior to interviewing users and non-users, five interviews and focus groups were held with 13 UPD managers and staff to examine their perceptions regarding (a) levels of staff members' cross-cultural competence; and (b) levels of cooperation between the Urbana Park District and other community stakeholders (e.g., school districts, faith-based organizations, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, Champaign County Community Coalition).

The interviews and focus groups took approximately 60-75 minutes and were held at Urbana Park District facilities. All of the interviews and focus groups were conducted in English. They were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The managers and staff were not given any tokens of appreciation for their participation. All focus groups and interviews took place during the working day.

### **Focus groups and interviews with the UPD users and non-users**

Interviews and focus groups were conducted with 46 UPD users and non-users. Park District program users received up to four daily free pool passes to the Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center for their participation. In addition, they were included in a drawing for eight \$25 gift cards to Walmart. Non-users were given \$25 gift cards to Walmart as an incentive. The focus groups lasted approximately one hour and were held at Urbana Park District facilities and at the Orchard Downs Community Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The following methods were used to recruit the study participants:

1. Lists of program participants provided by the UPD
2. Door-to-door visits in minority communities (personal invitation to participate in the study and flyer distribution)
3. Intercepting minorities in high traffic areas in minority communities (e.g., gas stations, parks, county market) (personal invitation to participate in the study and flyer distribution)
4. Visits to Latino-owned businesses
5. Posting on the UPD facebook page
6. Posting on WeChat (group for Chinese families in the C-U area)
7. Snowball through personal contacts of UIUC graduate students in minority communities (Asian, Latino and African American)
8. Personal contacts of leaders of community organizations (e.g., Robin Arbiter)
9. List of Latino families obtained from a key informant
10. Flyers posted at Lincoln Square Mall, the food co-op, and the Urbana Free Library

Flyers were distributed to both users and non-users are included in Appendixes I-L.

The purpose of the focus groups and interviews with the UPD users and non-users were to investigate the following: (a) minority residents' recreational needs and interests, constraints to accessing recreation programs offered by the Park District, and perceived benefits of

participation in recreation programs, (b) the characteristics of recreation programs parents are looking for when making decision about their children's participation, (c) needs, interests, and constraints related to the utilization of parks and park facilities, and (d) their priorities when selecting recreation programs for their children.

A complete list of questions asked of non-users and users during the interviews and focus groups can be found in Appendixes A-E. Consent forms can be found in Appendixes F-H.

Table 1 outlines the demographic characteristics of users and non-users.

#### Focus groups and interviews with African American Residents

*Non-Users* – A total of eight African American non-users participated in the study. Five residents participated in a focus group on Monday, November 14<sup>th</sup> from 7-8pm at the Brookens Gym and three residents were interviewed individually in person and over the phone.

*Users* – A total of eight African American users participated in the study. Three residents participated in a focus group on Tuesday, November 15<sup>th</sup> from 7-8pm at the Brookens Gym and five residents were interviewed individually over the phone.

In addition to the two primary researchers, two research assistants helped with the recruitment, organization, and running of these focus groups and interviews – Raebekkah Pratt-Clarke (undergraduate student at RST), and Leslie Camarillo (MS student at RST and RA for the UPD study). A couple of children were present during the focus groups. All of the focus groups and interviews were conducted in English. They were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. Pizza and drinks were served at the focus groups.

#### Focus groups and interviews with Asian Residents

*Non-Users* – A total of eight Asian non-users participated in the study. Six residents (of Chinese, Pakistani, and Iraqi origin) participated in a focus group on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> from 4-5pm at the Orchard Downs Community Center.

*Users* – A total of eight Asian users participated in the study. Eight residents (of Chinese, Taiwanese, Thai, and Indonesian origin) participated in a focus group on Saturday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> from 3-4 pm at the Orchard Downs Community Center. Two residents were interviewed individually over the phone.

Several research assistant helped with the recruitment, organization, and running of these focus groups and interviews – Maggie Phan (Ph.D. student, RST), Ina Zhou (Ph.D. student, RST), Zhi Li (faculty member at BISU and a visiting scholar at UIUC), as well as Raebekkah Pratt-Clarke and Leslie Camarillo. Several children were present during the focus groups, and pizza and drinks were served. All of the interviews and focus groups were conducted in English. They were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim.

### Focus groups and interviews with Latino Residents

*Non-Users* – A total of seven Latino non-users participated in the study. Five residents (of Mexican and Chilean origin) participated in a focus group on Sunday, November 20<sup>th</sup> from 3-4 at the UPD Planning and Operations facility. The focus group was conducted in Spanish and was led by Leslie Camarillo. Her cultural background, fluency in Mexican Spanish, and knowledge of issues of local Latino communities helped in establishing rapport with focus group participants. Two residents (of Puerto Rican and Peruvian origin) were interviewed individually over the phone.

*Users* – A total of seven Latino users participated in the study. All residents (of Mexican, Chilean, El Salvadorian, and Colombian origin) were interviewed individually over the phone as it was difficult to find a time that was convenient for a focus group.

Several children were present during the focus group with non-users. Participants were not asked about the legality of their status in the U.S. All of the interviews and focus groups were tape recorded and transcribed verbatim. The focus group conducted in Spanish was subsequently translated to English by Leslie Camarillo.

### **Analysis of the Focus Groups and Interview Data**

The analysis of the interview and focus group material began after the first interviews and focus groups had been completed and lasted throughout the duration of the study. Following each focus group/interview, two sets of notes were created. The first one included all the contextual information regarding the focus group/interview in question (characteristics of participants, location, events that occurred during the focus group/interview etc.). The second included a summary of the main themes that had surfaced during the conversations and the researchers' preliminary interpretation of the information. These notes shared among and discussed by the researchers, were helpful in adjusting questions asked in the following focus groups/interviews. After all the focus groups/interviews had been transcribed, the transcripts were analyzed using a constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In order to isolate the themes and sub-themes and to group them into categories, each focus group/interview transcript was independently read several times by the researchers involved in the study and then discussed until a consensus was reached on the classification of the data. After all the relevant points had been synthesized, the transcripts were re-read again to ensure all of the important aspects of the phenomena had been accounted for. Moreover, to increase trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), we relied on several methods of data recording that ensured accurate transcription of the discussions. As a result of the analysis, several main themes were identified (see the Findings section).

**Table 1**  
**Socio-Economic Background of Study Participants**

User/ Non- User	Race/ Ethnicity	Focus Group/ Interview	Pseudonym	Sex	Age	Occupation	Origin	Years in the US (among immigrants)
N-U	AA	FG	Karina	F	Mid 30s	Homemaker		
N-U	AA	FG	Jill	F	Over 40	Childcare provider		
N-U	AA	FG	Roger	M	Late 50s	Homemaker		
N-U	AA	FG	Samantha	F	?	?		
N-U	AA	FG	Tara	F	23	Urbana Meijer, deli section		
N-U	AA	I	Debbie	F	55	On disability; worked as a CNA before stroke, worked in private home care, took care of older people	Originally from Aurora	
N-U	AA	I	Brad	M	Late 20s	Works part time in moving company	Originally from Chicago	
N-U	AA	I	Jerry	M	57	On disability	From New Orleans ("Katrina refugee")	
U	AA	FG	Trisha	F	Mid 40s	Culinary training coordinator at the UIUC		
U	AA	FG	Sheryl	F	40	Champaign Public Schools (family and life skills department)		
U	AA	FG	Thom	M	48	Janitor at a restaurant		
U	AA	I	Nelson	M	52	Graduate student in Education	Africa	
U	AA	I	Lawanda	F	35	Healthcare worker for Carle Hospital		

U	AA	I	Oscar	M		Works for the university and several businesses in Urbana		
U	AA	I	Daphne	F	28	C-U Mass Transit		
U	AA	I	Marcus	M	39	Works for the university (Higher Education administration)		
NU	AS	I	Mahnoor	F	Early 30s	Ph.D. in physics, homemaker	Pakistan	
NU	AS	I	Putri	F	48	Community aid in Orchard Downs; newspaper delivery	Indonesia	4 years
NU	AS	FG	Wang	M	31	Associate Professor (visiting scholar)	China	3 months
NU	AS	FG	Mohammad	M	35	Ph.D. student	Pakistan	7 years
NU	AS	FG	Zainab	F	36	Grad student	Iraq	5 months
NU	AS	FG	Lin	F	40	Office support specialist	China	36 years
NU	AS	FG	Jane	F	24	Conference producer	China	24 years
NU	AS	FG	Alice	F	25	Data curator	China	25 years
U	AS	FG	Huang	F	32	Teacher	China	1 year
U	AS	FG	Poppi	F	38	Visiting scholar	China	1 year
U	AS	FG	Vivian	F	40s	Attorney	Chinese-American	Since birth
U	AS	FG	Jessica	F	36	Homemaker	China	Over 1 year
U	AS	FG	Nan	F	46	Business manager	Thailand	19 years
U	AS	FG	Intan	F	34	Homemaker	Indonesia	1.5 years
U	AS	FG	Helen	F	45	Homemaker	China	17 years
U	AS	FG	Yang	F	37	Lab manager	China	8 years
N-U	LAT	FG	Andrea	F	35	Homemaker	Mexico (Guerrero)	15 years
N-U	LAT	FG	Gabriela	F	42	Homemaker	Mexico (Guanajuato)	20 years
N-U	LAT	FG	Itzel	F	48	Homemaker	Mexico (Puebla)	27 years

N-U	LAT	FG	Diana	F	27	Homemaker	Mexico (Puebla)	6 years
N-U	LAT	FG	Andres	M	36	Grad student	Chile	5 years
N-U	LAT	I	Angel	M	33	National Guard	Puerto Rico	Since birth
N-U	LAT	I	Veronica	F	71	Public accountant	Peru	20 years
U	LAT	I	Francisca	F	40	Homemaker	Chile	2.5 years
U	LAT	I	Karla	F	33	Homemaker	Mexico (Michoacan)	4 years
U	LAT	I	Constanza	F	41	Ph.D. student	Chile	2 years
U	LAT	I	Laura	F	40s	Co-director of Arts Engagement at the Krannert Center		
U	LAT	I	Elisa	F	27	“work and study”	El Salvador	10 Years
U	LAT	I	Luisa	F	47	Homemaker, works part time processing photographs for the university	Colombia	8 Years
U	LAT	I	Carlos	M	53	UIUC Extension and 4H	Mexico	

## IV. Complete Findings

The Findings section of the Report has been divided into seven main themes that correspond to the objectives of the study. Most of the themes are divided into sub-themes that are supported with selected quotes from the study participants.

### 1. What are the recreational **needs and interests** of the underserved population in Urbana? Are the current activity offerings of the Urbana Park District meeting the needs of underserved constituents?

#### - African American Non-Users

African American non-users have been asked what kinds of programs they would be interested in participating if their constraints on participation have been lifted or reduced. The activities and programs mentioned included: basketball, “gym,” dance, ballet, swimming, gymnastics, football and baseball.

Some of the participants mentioned they or their children had participated in these activities before but stopped participation for various of reasons.

*“I usually play basketball for Urbana Park District when I was younger... When I was in my teens.” [Asked if he plays sports right now] “No, really not now. But I still want to be a coach one day. I’ve done it [coaching] before, but I don’t know about the process [of becoming a coach for the UPD]” (Brad, AA, N-U)*

*“Well, once we did go here, we did [use Brookens] because my son was playing baseball. I haven’t been using it in about maybe eight years or so.... He ran a track too and he plays a little basketball.” (Jerry, AA, N-U)*

Others talked about activities they would like their children or grandchildren to participate in.

*“My kids are interested in dance, ballet, swimming, gymnastics. Gymnastic is extremely high.” (Samantha, AA, N-U)*

*“Well baseball -- I think they play baseball because they know where to hit the ball, they hit the window.” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

Asked what kinds of activities they currently engaged in, participants mentioned either passive, home-based recreation or simply not engaging in leisure at all. Children in the Lierman community neighboring Brookens Gym played unsupervised games in the barren yard in between apartment buildings.

*“I watch a lot of sports on TV... I play on PlayStation... I’m a home body and I like to be by myself.” (Brad, AA, N-U)*

*[In response to a question about what children in the Lierman community do for leisure] “We’ll just keep them in the house... they have nothing to do.” [Interviewer: parents keep them in the house?] Yeah, or they’ll sneak out the house and do bad stuff, you know? Because there’s a lot of young parents out here too.... [Interviewer: What do they do in the house? Play computer games?] “Yeah, that’s what they’d be on, like my grandson, that’s all he do is play his games.” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

A quote from Jerry, one of the older residents of the Lierman community, provides a good description of how the community has changed in the last 10 years.

*“Because these kids, they definitely need somewhere -- something to get involved in because the only playground they have is that little area over there [showing to the interviewer a small plot of land in between the apartment buildings]. We used to have all sorts of recreations around here. But things started to get bad and... this [community] is like a revolving door. People come here and go out. It’s just*

*we don't have enough people that get involved with the kids. Well, because it's most to be a rent out to people who just want to come in and just stay for of couple of months or so or something like that, maybe five, six months or so, and they're gone. What's making it bad is that we have a lot of people come in and like destroy the property -- not destroy, just do something bad to the apartment or what else. And I got people here that have been here way longer than I've been here, like Ms. [name redacted], she'd been here for 34 years, and [name redacted], she's been here for 14 years. Those are the people that made this their home. I'm staying here; I've been trying to make it my home, and we have a lot of people like that. It's what you can afford. I mean if I could afford to get out here and move in to a better place, I would. But then we have a lot of people just to be here and just to have their friends here and just make things bad for everybody. Well over here [showing to the interviewer an area about 20 feet from his apartment], we used to have swimming pool [before "things turned bad about 6 years ago"] I mean for kids, pool, ground pool and volleyball or big horse shoes, or have all sorts of games. We used to have races up and down the street. The city police used to come to the races. We used to block this whole area off and have kids' parties, and the kids used to have all sorts of activities right out here in the parking lot.... This is was 2006, 2007, maybe 2008. We started the neighborhood action committee and we had a lot of volunteers coming from around here. We used to have -- on the weekend like a church organization here, would bring in lots of foods and snacks and stuff for the kids and spread out like anywhere on the street here and we'll just have stuff for kids. Then we started the garden, the neighborhood garden and we've been doing that for that last seven years now. (Jerry, AA, N-U)*

- **African American Users**

When asked to describe activities African American users engaged in, the participants mentioned: soccer (youth), swimming (both indoor and outdoor), tennis, basketball (youth), baseball (youth), ballet (youth), fitness, yoga, and tap dance (youth).

Users also mentioned renting park pavilions for various occasions (birthday parties, church activities), visiting the Anita Purves Nature Center and signing their children for art camps.

*"I have two kids (15 and 17). So, they're with soccer programs mostly and then also the swimming program... they've been involved every year. Personally, I do Tennis and then soccer." (Nelson, AA, U)*

*"My daughter did tap dance earlier this year, and I was really pleased. The instructor was really good about communicating with the parents and she's just really hands on with the kids. I just like her way of teaching... The times are pretty good. [The program] was on Saturday mornings. So that was a good time*



*for me to stay there and watch them and have to do something together on Saturdays.” (Daphne, AA, U)*

*“My daughter was with the art camp during the summer. She attended the last couple of years and she loved it. I love it too... When my oldest was younger, she also did a ballet. She took a class there.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*“We use the Nature Center a lot because we live right there and so like it’s been real nice. My kids always go there to look at the animals or they have interactive stuff to play with. Once a month maybe and then we’ll do dog trail. So we’ve got hiking and stuff in the woods too.” (female, AA, U)*

*[We used] “Outdoor pool, indoor pool, facilities and parks. I coach -- my son and my daughter, the 6-year old and the 10-year old soccer teams.” (Marcus, AA, U)*

The opinions of the programs offered by the UPD among the African American users were very positive. They praised their variety, quality of instruction, as well as courtesy and helpfulness of the staff, particularly at the Phillips Center.

*“They have a good variety of programs and that’s what you want; it’s something for everybody. Everybody could feel that they’re part of the district and can feel involved.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*[Interviewer: Do they offer programs that interest you?] “Yeah. I’ve seen a couple fitness-related things that I’m interested in doing, and just some other little things they have around the holidays are interesting too. It’s just the matter of signing up actually going.” (Daphne, AA, U)*

*“The people at the desk are really nice, especially when you sign up for that summer stuff. When you’re trying to sign up each week for the summer programs, and all the different groups, they’re really good at tabbing their pages; they are helping you separate the book.” (female, AA, U)*

*“Yeah, so far [the staff has been friendly]. I would say yes [the staff is culturally sensitive] because I haven’t had any negative experience with any of them.” (Nelson, AA, U)*

*“I do feel comfortable [in the UPD programs] [Interviewer: Is the staff friendly?] “You know, for the most part, they all are. They have a lot of different programs and activities that we like. So they have some interesting things going on there.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

The same interviewee, however, also expressed some concern about the front desk staff in the Brookens Gym:

*“It’s just like business when you walk in there. There’re not a lot of friendly people either, I would say that. They are not friendly at all to me. Yeah, at the Brookens building. They are not friendly at all. When I went there, there was no “hello” no “How are you”, no nothing. It was just like strictly business. You don’t even get greeted by the hostess at the door, like the receptionist. There’s no “how are you doing” or anything, strictly business.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

- **Asian Non-Users**

Asian non-users represented immigrants from China, Pakistan, Iraq and Indonesia. When asked what kind of activities they would like to engage in, they mentioned walking, running, swimming and open air cooking of new (American) and traditional ethnic foods.

*“Maybe some walking or running kind of things. And in the park, if there would be something like open air cooking. Like learning new ones and also presenting your own [dishes]. I enjoy these kinds of activities. You can just learn all. Mostly I like [cooking] Pakistani [foods] but I like to try others also as I spent four years in Italy. So I like to taste other flavors and all the other things related to different cultures.” (Hassan, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“Because I used to swim every day in our country (Indonesia) and I really miss that one. Because what I do when I do swimming, I don’t do -- that’s what we call ‘social swimming’ but I do lap swimming. That’s why if you give me any choice, I will say number one is swimming. I will pick swimming.” (Putri, AS, Indonesia, N-U)*

- **Asian Users**

Asian users represented immigrants from China, Thailand and Indonesia. Some of them were recent immigrants (1 year in the US), while others were second generation Chinese-American.

The interviewees mentioned a variety of activities they and their children engaged in – swimming (both indoor and outdoor), ballet (youth), summer camps (nature and arts), and soccer (youth). Asian users also mentioned attending various festivals in the Urbana parks, walking and enjoying nature.

*“I’m really happy that the City of Urbana has a swimming facility. We go to the UIAC almost every day, mainly because of my son’s swimming.” (Helen, China, AS, U)*

*“My daughter has ballet lessons at the Phillips Recreational Center and also the swimming lessons at the Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center. And for the summer camp - we just change from the nature camp, art camp. And I went to*

*Meadowbrook Park too because they can play at the playground. They love the playground.” (Intan, AS, Indonesia, U, two daughters - 5 and 6 years old)*

*“Throughout the years, based on the age range of my child, we’ve attended different things. We had a birthday party at the Blair Park, the art camp, summer camp, ballet, swim past overtime; my husband does that too. And then just the discrete exercise activities they have, like they did in boot camp in the mornings, and the strawberry jam in Meadowbrook. So we do a lot of free stuff, like whatever’s in the catalogue and just kind of put in our calendar and I bring her (daughter), especially on the summertime when it’s really nice.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American U)*

*“My older one is seven years old and my other one is almost four, so we use the swimming facility (indoor). My older one goes to the summer camp in the Urbana Park District and uses the soccer program.” (Yang, AS, China, U)*

The opinions on the quality of programs and facilities among Asian users were mixed. While some appreciated the aquatic facilities and the variety of programs offered by the UPD, others were concerned about the overall cleanliness (outdoor pools), the quality of training of the seasonal staff, and perceived low level of instruction. The concerns among Asian users and their suggestions for improvement of the UPD programs will be described in detail in Sections 2 and 5 of the report.

*“I’ve been using their facilities in many different levels. So the swimming pool, we appreciate the outdoor one exclusively. The staff is very, very friendly and nice, and the facility is outstanding on the plus side.” (Nan, AS, Thailand, U)*

*“I think from somebody who lives here long-term, I feel this investment. And that’s why whenever they [UPD] have post [activity] surveys, I always type in what I really liked and what they can improve. And they’re really good about making those changes or calling you to say, “Oh, we got this, what do you mean by that?” I think our program is very responsive. I think it’s great for the community and especially for people who maybe aren’t as active just to have that ability to be like, “Oh, yeah, I can sign up for this,” or “I can go for a while. It’s not a whole year commitment but I can do it.”” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

- **Latino Non-Users**

Latino non-users interviewed in this study represented immigrants from Mexico, Chile, Peru, and one person from Puerto Rico. Asked what types of activities they would be interested in participating, Latino non-users mentioned exercising, swimming, soccer running, archery, and weaving classes.

*“Exercising, swimming, running, anything like that or even... I’ve read something about animal handling or something like that. I think it was for the kids or something but I was like, “Oh, I’ll do that, too.” (Angel, LAT, Puerto Rico, N-U)*

Angel was a member of the National Guard in Urbana. He was using a local private gym and jogged in his neighborhood and the National Guard Armory. He narrated, *“I mean I don’t really go out much but I would rather run and do my running outside than I would on a treadmill. I don’t really like it. I prefer running outside. It’s better. I run around my neighborhood and then, during the weekend, I run around the blocks like around where the Armory is; I run around that building.” (Angel, LAT, Puerto Rico, N-U)*

*“I went [to the Phillips Center] once because I wanted to take weaving classes. It said in the magazine that they were offering a weaving class. When I went there, unfortunately I did not find it. That day they either they weren’t holding the class or the teacher did not come. I don’t know what happened....I really only saw that because of the catalog that they sent me ... It caught my attention because more than anything, since I’m an adult, I said, “Ah, this is good for me to distract myself and learn.” Since then I didn’t go back again because it became a little difficult for me.” (Veronica, LAT, Peru, N-U)*

Latino non-users praised the variety of programs offered by the UPD and the friendly and helpful attitude among the UPD staff. Their suggestions for improvement of programs, their accessibility, and marketing techniques are included in other sections of the report.

*[Asked whether their opinion about the UPD was positive or negative]*  
*“Positive... Well, for all they have, one can sign them up to soccer, swimming, dancing, or whatever.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“The truth is that the book is very complete for children. They have art, they have swimming, they have soccer, they have guitar lessons, music, everything.” (Gabriela, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

Andrea, Andres, Itzel, and Gabriela (LAT, N-U) confirmed that they never felt discriminated in the UPD programs or offices. Andrea commented, *“Yes. [I have been to their offices] I have always been treated well.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U).* Itzel confirmed, *“Oh yes. They are very friendly.” (Itzel, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

- **Latino Users**

Latino users listed a number of UPD programs and camps that they and their children participated in – soccer (youth and adult), swimming (youth and adult), yoga, summer arts program, and summer sports camps.

*“We use swimming and also the summer sports camp.” (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)*

*“We go to the parks and sometimes to the pool. My eight-year-old son plays soccer [at Brookens]. I like to go to the pool, I like soccer, I like to dance, yoga ... (laughs)” (Francisca, LAT, Chile, U)*

*“We use the Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center and Crystal Lake Park.... We wanted to enroll my baby, but he’s only eleven months old ... I think registrations are coming out this month, so we’re going to register for this Spring.” (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*“Since he (son) was about six years old he’s been part of the Park District’s Summer Arts Program. I believe it’s currently run by Erica Cooper-Peyton. We really like the variety of the Summer Arts Program that was brought in for the children to work on. We ended up having friends. When he was in the first grade, which would have been in 2006, he would see his friends and then they would see each other next year. He also was at Counselor in Training one summer and then Teens in Action. That was the last one he participated. He was about 12 that year.” (Laura, LAT, Mexican, U)*

*“I signed up for the Urbana Park District because my son loves swimming. In my country (Colombia), he used to swim so we needed to find some swimming activities. Last year, we paid for some classes; this year we are a bit shorter on money so we asked the Park District for help and they helped me. [Interviewer: Was it easier for you to play sports or join a program in Colombia?] “Of course! Yes. There the sports is free for us. We live in a village surrounded by mountains and there we have a public swimming pool and residents pay nothing. Obviously they have their coaches ... my son swam with the Red Cross and then we came here [to the US] and we wanted him to continue, but as I said, now that I signed him up, he had to do tests so they could see what level he fell under... He wants to continue. In the meantime we are having him take classes at the Park District to see how it goes. That’s why he’s taking classes.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia U, son is 11).*

The opinions of Latino users on the UPD staff were very positive. Only one Latino user indicated having a problem with staff of a sports camp run at the Brookens Gym.

*“The guy that was in charge, I don’t know his name, has been the only one that I’ve seen be a little racist with me as the child’s mother. [Interviewer: Why do you think he was racist to you, but not with your children?] Well, he (son) doesn’t complain to me so I don’t know, but there were times when I arrived and he gave information to the other parents, but he never addressed me or told me anything. Sometimes you notice the attitudes ... I do not know how to explain it but you can notice it.” (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)*

## **What other activities people would like the UPD to offer?**

Users and non-users were asked what kind of activities they would like the UPD to offer beyond of what is already included in the UPD programming portfolio. The suggestions included: a program for young mothers where they could share their stories and learn how to cope with stress and discuss issues related to raising children (a recommendation made by several interviewees), “wine and paint” programs for adults, cooking and baking classes (a recommendation made by several interviewees), volleyball for youth, and Latino dance classes (beyond of what is already being offered). The suggestions made by the interviewees were based on the programs they or their friends and family members participated in that were organized by other agencies.

A major concern among a number of interviewees was that the UPD does not provide a sufficient number of programs for teenage youth.

Programs for young families and single mothers were mentioned by several interviewees.

*“A group where they could talk about things. Talk about their problems and try to get it worked out. Like a father and mother program. You know, if they're having problems at their home, with your kids and stuff, they can come here and talk to somebody because somebody else might have the same problems and they probably fix their problems and they can tell that person how to fix it. And all the yelling and howling, cussing their kids, that's not going to help them. That's going to even make them worse.... My niece goes to one [a program like this in Aurora]. She goes to one every Tuesday. It's a mother-father program to talk about their kids, talk about what kind of stress they're going through with their kids and stuff and how they can work it out... Sometimes they go on a camping trip. A bus comes by and picks all the mothers up in the neighborhood and they go on a resort and stay there for a night or two, get a break from their kids. And when their parent is right there in this room talking about their kids, the kids are playing in another room. You know, they don't have no babysitters. She (niece) comes back, she says she is so relieved from all the stress and problems out of her chest and then she said she knows how to talk to her kids a little bit better.” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

*“That's the key, a good safe place where they [young moms] will go, so they can get good experience and positive stuff. The ladies that got young kids that are growing up, they need a positive thing. A place where they could have like a mentor, a place where they could come by and do different things, that is positive, so they can learn stuff or have a positive input.” (Roger, AA, N-U)*

*“I think maybe they [the UPD] could expand to provide something to help single moms. I'm a single mother and I think just doing more things... it's hard when the kids are out of school, during the summer. I think that would be beneficial to a single parent whether it's just like a jamboree or something, something positive to put into the community. Different things like an annual Christmas party or something for children ages this to this. Different little things will definitely bring some positivity to*

*Urbana, especially considering all of the different violence and everything that's been taken place.” (Daphne, AA, U)*

A number of interviewees recommended that the UPD provides more programs related to food, arts and activities related to health that can be done outdoors. A common perception, particularly among Asian interviewees was that a great proportion of the UPD programs targets families and children, while single adults were reluctant to participate in such activities.

*“I got a great idea. I see a lot of -- I don't even know if they (the UPD) can have alcoholic beverage, but it doesn't have to be wine, but I see the “wine and paint” programs. A lot of people have those activities where you can setup with a group of friends and you can paint there. I haven't heard of anything going on like that at the Urbana Park District. I know a lot of people are involved in those. Like even without the wine, I think those classes are great to offer. They have those at Jupiter's but Jupiter's is so far out. There're a lot of people who enjoy it.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*“So, the Phillips Recreational Center, I take classes there. It's really good for me. But I'm thinking for somebody that's single, who didn't have family, like fitness and hobbies and things to learn are great, like cooking class or baking classes. The yoga in the park in the summer is a great activity for single people. But it's only held in one park and when I went there a couple of times, there're so many people there that you can't even hear the instructor giving out instructions. There's one instructor for like 50 people. Why don't you have yoga in park at these other places? If you see there's a large amount of people that are interested, you need to ... do more of it in other areas.” (Alice, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I was going back to the painting thing. She (another focus group participant) was saying “photography” but I think like in the summer, the parks would be a great place and just to go and learn how to paint from somebody, and this should be free because it's outdoors. You just maybe pay for the material, but that's about it. Summertime is a huge great time to do stuff in the park. Book club. Read in the park. I'm thinking about the international students that are here could use the park for -- not just recreation, but relaxation from your studies.” (Jane, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I think what is missing are other health programs, such as healthy cooking or, for example, stress relief ... especially for parents.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*“For us, being a family with kids, if they have lot of creative activities for kids, that will be one good attraction because always being a student and being a parent we look for opportunities where there are some creative experiences, where we can take our kids, where they can learn something. Something related to maybe American culture or some other cultures like the strawberry jam thing that there is music and there are rides for the people and there's some face painting. Such activities would be really attractive.” (Mohammad, AS, N-U)*

Carlos who organized recreation activities for Latinos living in the northern part of the state as part of his work for the UIUC extension discussed the popularity of dance-oriented activities.

*“We don’t really have a dance hall here where people go. There is one over there which we call Tequilas but on Cunningham, but a place where people go to have a birthday party. As far as I know, they’re not renting it from the park. [We offered] Latino dancing instruction and then dancing and we had the greatest fun. [Interviewer: If there’s a Latino dancing, what kind of Latino dancing are you talking about?] Everything is going to have an audience. For us that day, we have Bachata, we had Salsa and we had Cumbia. Different people stood up at different times. [Interviewer: One of the activities that the UPD offers is Latino traditional dance.] I know, but that sounded fishy. What is traditional dance? Which Latinos? So, I had no idea [when I saw it in the program guide]. [Interviewer: This is really interesting to me when you said fishy. How did you read it or when you saw it?] Well, because it’s not specific enough. If you say Cumbia, Mexicans will be okay to it. If you say Salsa, young Latinos will go to it, but older Mexicans won’t go to Salsa. So, if you organize a Quinceañera, you have to mix them all because you have all ages there and all kinds of sources, origin countries, but your first direction is whether you want to make it Mexican or not. If you’re going to be open to something besides Mexican, then which ones and it’s usually Caribbean music. [Interviewer: So, what would be your advice to the Urbana Park District?] I think for most of us ...we still need a little bit of instruction. I’m no salsa dancer. I still need to get warmed up before I’ll venture to go try stuff on the floor. Instruction with dance. It can be very clean. You can have pizza and sell this for a buck and people will love it, I think. But the other thing is and that’s where I’m developing in 4-H, if we’re going to have programming, the whole family is going to come. Therefore, you can have them be on the sidelines. If it’s soccer, you can cheer. The moms will cheer, but if you have something for them, something for the two to three ages, now you have engaged the family.”*  
(Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U).

A number of Latino and Asian interviewees also stressed the importance of providing activities for a variety of age groups. Veronica, a 71 old immigrant from Peru believed that more activities should target older Urbana residents. She commented,

*“Well, to me, particularly as an old woman, I would like to have groups where, for example, people can learn to knit, learn to dance, to sing ... things that I think probably ... I’ve seen a lot, from my sister that lives in Florida. They have that center they have all kind of things, where they meet adults and have English classes, they have Spanish classes, they have sewing classes, weaving ... small things like that. Classes like that [you can do] as a group! [Interviewer: As a group? ... More social?] Exactly! [Interviewer: So you would like more social programs for older people?] Exactly!”* (Veronica, LAT, N-U)

A very common theme across interviewees from all three ethnic groups was a perception that the Urbana Park District does not provide enough activities targeting teenagers,



particularly those who are not interested in sports. Classes related to beauty (hair, makeup, nails), skate park, self-defense, and more volunteer opportunities were mentioned as examples of activities the Park District could consider providing.

*“I do think they [the UPD] should have more things for teenagers to do like the ones that are kind of in the middle... like my daughter’s 14 but if she don’t really like sports. You know, maybe like make-up studio, like some type of stuff like nails or something for girls who don’t play sports.” (Sheryl, AA, U)*

*“I have friends that have teenage kids and their biggest complaint is there are not a lot of things for teenagers to do. And like even having a skate park or something, because my friend whose son was skating on campus...the police came and stopped him.” (female, AA, U)*

*“Even having a club or someplace where they [teenagers] could go to hang out” (female, AA, U)*

*“Like some kind of teen center or something like a safe place...You know, something for these middle kids.” (female, AA, U)*

*“Just about like having more stuff for teenagers to do. You know, some basketball courts and some stuff for teenage girls to do that don’t play sports.” (female, AA, U)*

*“Yeah, like drawing and stuff like that.” (male, AA, U)*

*“Yeah, hair or something any kind that has fashion.” (female, AA, U)*

*“I have a son who’s been a skateboarder since he’s a little guy and there really isn’t any opportunities for that group, but I know that there are a lot of kids in the community that skateboard so we would love to see if that could be something that could happen in the community.” (Marcus, AA, U)*

*“I’d love to see something related to self-defense. My oldest son did well in Tennessee when we had him in a kid-based Taekwondo class, and it wasn’t anything too intense, just the basics, because just the discipline associated with the self-defense class I think would be helpful. And maybe something like math or science team, something that will utilize the indoor spaces when it gets cold. That could be academic-focused.” (Marcus, AA, U)*

*“The summer camps, we had outgrown them. So we’re hoping that if the park has some other projects such as volunteer that youth could attend throughout the year. And then maybe like if they volunteer of 1,000 hours, the park could give them a certificate. We feel like once we finish with elementary school, we’re not part of it [Park District]. There’s a gap that we would like to give back to the park and feel like we have ownership. Any park to involve teenagers more once they’re through – years 12 and up. More volunteer opportunities...like for example, if you have time*

*Saturday afternoon, just one hour, you can walk around and pick up garbage. (Nan, AS, Thailand, U)*

*“I do agree with Nan that it seems like the age cutoff for most activities in the catalog for children is about 12 to 13. And then you have this big gap where you just have to encourage them to keep getting exercise or try team sports maybe with school or outside the school. And then you have with the 16 and up where they can go unsupervised where it’s more with the adults. But there is that four-year gap... And you have a lot of kids who then are just sitting at home. They’re too old to be part of daycare or afterschool care, but they still need to get out and do things. So I think offering some activities for that age group would be good. But you have to really do things that are interesting and things that they really want to do. So if it’s something that’s more of a physical activity, I’d say stick with those sports that they’re already in. And so, if they continue some activities along that line, I think people would still participate.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American U)*

*“He was kind of at that age where the kids kind of age out, 12 and 13 age groups, the Park District really wasn’t serving the programming where it’s something that he was interested in anymore. And so we tried Parkland, College for Kids program and then he ended up getting a summer job. He’s 16 now. [Interviewer: You said that he aged out of those programs?] Yes. Three years ago, in the summer of 2014, there was an opportunity at the Fab Lab on campus to be in those different Fab Lab camps and they were kind of new or newish at the time. And then this past summer, when he was 15.5, he did the paid internship program at the Fab Lab. I think he would be interested if there were internship opportunities as part of a UPD program because by the time they reach the end of eight grade, they’re really interested in building their student resume as well as being in a program that they’re really excited about. I think he was really looking for an opportunity to demonstrate student leadership or how he could be part of a team. He did the Counselor in Training because he wanted to have more of a junior leader type of role. I think a lot of teens are interested in things like social justice, arts, and sort of performing arts component. I know that the Park District already offers that but I’m saying like a very team-centered, team-focused, like issues that matter to them kind of thing. What else might be interesting? I think, of course, the STEM stuff. A summer program that can balance some more academic/student-leader role with an outside component, so maybe like ecology or something in the sciences that would take them outside like field study type of work. I think that would be absolutely fantastic.” (Laura, LAT, Mexico, U)*

### **What are the other places where people go for recreation?**

UPD users and non-users were asked where else, besides the UPD programs and parks, they spent their free time. Several participants, primarily African American non-users, mentioned home and church activities. Private clubs such as Charter Fitness and Planet Fitness, YMCA, and fitness facilities that belonged to apartment complexes have also been mentioned. Not surprisingly, interviewees who were UIUC graduate students frequently

used campus recreation facilities such as ARC and CRCE, as well as recreation areas in the vicinity of Orchard Downs university housing units.

**a) Home and church**

*“In the summer time, I know we look for the free things. I have eight grandkids and I’ll babysit them when their parents work.” (AA female, N-U)*

*“Well, if I can, I’ll go to church. But normally if I’m doing stuff with my brother, I’ve been helping him a lot with rent too when I can ... he had a stroke, so I help him out a lot. That’s one of my recreation things, working with him.” (Roger, AA, N-U)*

*[Talking about children who come to play to his Lierman apartment after school]*  
*“They’d come here every day. There are a lot of kids that come in. ... I think of it as an extension from the school. When you come from school, you don’t have to just go out there and be bad and throw rocks and disobey your parents and disrespect people in the street. Come over here and I’ll just show you -- I got all kinds of coloring books and activities [showing the interviewer his collection of children’s books, crayons, and a calendar where he notes when each child came in and leaves on a given day]. I’d do it all summer long. The rest of the kids can get off the bus, they get it from school. They’re back into being adults because that’s the problem we’re having. The parents are expecting these kids to be adults. These kids just want to be kids. That’s why they come here. They don’t want to be in that environment when parents [are] crazing and talking stuff that the kids don’t need to be hearing. We used to walk these kids from here to the New Hope Church down by the school. We used to walk these kids to that church, like twice a week during the summer time ... [but not anymore] because we had a problem with a certain volunteer. See, a lot of people who stays here [in Lierman] they don’t see it outside like the city life, like talking to you. They don’t see that talking to you could be productive. They feel the only people they could talk to are the people in this circle right here [pointing to the Lierman community].” (Jerry, AA, N-U).*

**b) Other centers, private lessons, schools**

*“I can name a whole lot of places [where people go other than the UPD]. There’s the Urbana Connections Center. But a lot of people go there because it’s a little cheaper, a lot of African-American kids anyway. But there’s a lot of issues there, so my daughter, I didn’t want her to attend there; I’d rather go to the Urbana Park District because she’s treated fairly. There hasn’t been any incident where she felt mistreated. She hasn’t been in the Boys and Girls Club, but they offer a summer program as well. I just like it better in the Urbana Park District. The program that she was in, it’s less kids, it’s not overwhelming. It’s not too many kids where it’s frustrating for leaders, because I think places where the leaders are frustrated, [where there are] too many kids, they’re yelling at them, not treating them well.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*“I go to Charter Fitness.” (Lin, AS, N-U)*

*“Because actually, he [her son when he was 11] used to take piano lessons and piano lessons were done at home. And then, also, I signed him up for swimming but it was through a school not the Urbana Park District.... Because piano lesson doesn’t have anything to do with the park and there is no piano lesson in the park district, that’s why I had to find it by myself.” (Putri, AS, Indonesia, N-U)*

*Angel (LAT, Puerto Rican, N-U) goes to Planet Fitness: “They opened a new one right by my house, so I go there...The gym I used to go to was Charter, and I think that was on Vine and I would ride my bike there. I was getting cold, and then Fitness opened up, so I just go there. I walk there.”*

*“I would like to do more activities ... I signed up for the YMCA because I did not go to the Park District, but it would be better for me in the Park District because it is closer.” (Francisca, LAT, Chile, U)*

### **c) UIUC campus recreation facilities**

Most of the interviewed graduate students and visiting scholars mentioned using campus recreation facilities such as ARC and CRCE. They were free of charge for the students and conveniently located close to their department buildings. The students mentioned using primarily ARC and CRCE swimming pools and exercise equipment.

*“Having CRCE and ARC is a big factor [in why he is not using UPD facilities]. For example, I’m a grad student. My wife is also a grad student. Both of us are at school, we’ve been very busy and occupied, so we plan our own exercise and other activities which are close to the campus, maybe a break between the class or something. I go for swim to ARC, the park is close and CRCE is another pool that’s a little bit smaller. So that proximity is important. [I can visit the rec centers in between] running core classes, teaching, research.” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*[Explaining why she’s using campus recreation facilities] “It’s more about time. I am registered in the University so I can better plan my time around the recreation services that the university has. [Interviewer: So you use more college services because it fits more with your schedule?] “Of course! For my schedules and because they do not require an extra cost.” (Constanza, LAT, Chile, U)*

*“His reason [for using campus recreation services] is, actually for swimming, because he has the student card which he can go anytime. And then if he wants to play tennis, there are so many tennis courts on campus and he’s doing it with his friends on campus.” (Dorothea, AS, N-U)*

#### **d) Neighborhood community centers and rec areas**

Residents of the Orchard Downs housing units often used local community center, playgrounds, and took advantage of trips and special events organized by the University Housing Center. In addition, they frequently visited nearby Japan House, Idea Garden and Arboretum that they praised for its beauty and maintenance. When asked about their favorite Urbana parks, many identified the Idea Garden, Arboretum and Japan House without realizing that they belonged to the University of Illinois and not the Urbana Park District.

*“Within Orchard Downs, there are many play areas. For example, right by the back of my house where I live, they have the swings and the Community Center is not that far. And one distinct feature of living here is a lot of community programs, especially for families. They are focused on families, family education, like Chinese New Year, like something to celebrate. [Interviewee: Orchard Downs organizes them?] Yes, the Family & Graduate Housing organizes that. Just a lot of activities, swings and those inflated play areas.... bounce houses. And every year, there’s a different theme, sometimes Olympics, sometimes it’s something else. So families and kids, they do get a lot of activities here within this community as well.” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“I mostly attend different kinds of activities conducted in Orchard Downs area where I don’t have to go too far. There are many events over here like some creative events. They have some cook out programs or like there was some Thanksgiving program or programs on other special occasions.” (Mahnoor, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“We live in Orchard Downs and if we want to have walk, we will just have a walk around Orchard Downs. Usually, if I want to do exercise, I would just go up the hill, down the hill and then go around the Japan House with a small lake. If I don’t have much time, I will just do that instead of going to a park. It is in our backyard.” (Putri, AS, Indonesia, N-U)*

Several Chinese interviewees also mentioned using exercise areas in their apartment complexes.

*“After I graduated... actually, one thing that’s really important to me was to have a gym. And so when I was looking for housing, actually one criteria for me was to look for a gym. And so my housing -- actually, Monday, Sundays, I get to a small gym and I only need a treadmill and some weights and stuff. So they have that and so that’s good enough for me and I don’t have to leave my apartment, I just go to the basement.” (Jane, AS, China, N-U)*

**2. What are the **constraints** to accessing recreation programs among underserved populations in Urbana? Do those constraints differ between users and non-users?**

Users and non-users from all three ethnic groups were asked about constraints/barriers that prevented them from using and accessing UPD programs and facilities or from enjoying their participation. The most important constraints mentioned by a number of interviewees included fees/cost, transportation, lack of knowledge of opportunities, safety, language barrier, racial tensions, lack of time / scheduling conflicts, dissatisfaction with the level of instruction and (lack of) competitiveness of the programs, and lack of programs for single adults. Some of the interviewees also mentioned constraints such as lack of room in some UPD programs and popular programs being overcrowded, and lack of child care.

Some of the constraints were highly related to people's socio-economic status (e.g., cost, lack of knowledge of opportunities, transportation), while others were culture-related (e.g., programs not at a desired level, language barrier) or associated with people's undocumented status (e.g., lack of credit cards).

African American residents of the Lierman community (in the vicinity of Brookens Gym) were significantly different from other groups of interviewees with respect to a number and strength of constraints they have experienced. For the residents of Lierman:

- Cost was a prohibitive barrier almost impossible to overcome. It was compounded by large families and grandchildren in the care of older adults;
- Cost was closely associated with the transportation barrier;
- Safety was of paramount importance. For the last 8-10 years, the Lierman community has experienced a significant rise in crime. High crime levels (including a highly publicized shooting of a man that took place in September 2016) made interviewees concerned to spend time outdoors and to walk to nearby parks and facilities. In the fall of 2016, a group of residents petitioned to the City Council and the community management to take pro-active steps to curb crime in the area. Some changes have been made as a result (e.g., blocking off Ivanhoe Way - the street at back of the community, installing security cameras and increasing police presence), but their effect on the crime levels is yet to be determined.
- Lack of information was an important barrier to local residents. Interviews from Lierman indicated that they did not receive UPD brochures in the mail or flyers from the schools. They also indicated that lack of information outside of the Brookens Gym led them to believe that it was a "government building" and not a recreation center;
- Many residents shared the perception that police does not patrol the area. Anti-police sentiments, distrust of authorities, anger with strong racial undertones, and the perception the community has been "abandoned" by the city have surfaced in several interviews.

**a. Fees / cost**

Cost of activities was the most frequently mentioned constraint by both UPD program users and non-users. It was not so much related to the ethnic background of the study participants, but to their socio-economic status (e.g., middle class Latinos, African Americans, and Asians listed it significantly less frequently than their lower SES counterparts). In particular, the requirement for parents to pay the \$3 fee to accompany their children to the pool was criticized by the majority of the interviewees.

*"I know that for a fact, for a single parent it is definitely hard to go with kids."*  
(Roger, AA, N-U)

*"[For people on] fixed income, that's just extremely too much."* (Samantha, AA, N-U)

*"My children were in that program. They played soccer, but they stopped going."*  
[Interviewer: Why did they stop going?] *"The costs are expensive."* (Itzel, LAT, Mexico, N-U).

*[Replying to an interviewer's comment that to play basketball it only costs \$1 at the door] "Half of these kids out here (Lierman community) are hungry. The parents would be like, '\$1 dollar to give them every day for a child to go out and play basketball? That's ridiculous.'" (Karina, AA, N-U)*

*"I think it's a bit expensive, like, for example, he (her son) likes soccer, so we have to decide if he does soccer or swimming; You can't do both. Right now he's also in basketball, so we have to wait and see how ... Yes, because even if the Urbana Park District helps us, we still have to pay some, so one has to prioritize."* (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)

*"Most of the (Asian) population here is a grad student. You know the financial situation of grad students, especially if they're grad students with families with kids..."* (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)

*"I would appreciate the Indoor Aquatic Center because my son is a third grade student. He learned swimming lessons there. But I have one question, because I think when he and I go there swimming, I don't need to swim, he only needs to swim. But I needed to pay \$3 for supervising."* (Huang, AS, China, U) [Following up on Huang's comment] *"But many parents, they sneak in and they swim. So they changed their policy -- you swim, you pay \$6, you don't swim, you watch, you pay \$3. So there's a history of that. It's not like coming out of nowhere."* (Jessica, AS, China, U) [Trying to propose an alternative policy] *"I guess they could do maybe something like a wristband but that also costs money for them to track that."* (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)

## The scholarships

Approximately half of the people (both users and non-users) interviewed in this study were aware of the scholarships offered by the UPD, and for some, the scholarships were critical in facilitating their participation. A number of issues, however, were raised with respect to scholarships:

- Some people's reluctance to ask for help
- Perception that the application materials are only in the English language
- The scholarship application asked for a "proof of residency" which was understood by Hispanic interviewees as *proof of legal residency in the United States* – a factor that dissuaded application by many of Urbana undocumented residents
- In order to apply for a scholarship one needed to present pay stubs to prove their eligibility. Since many immigrants are paid in cash (underground economy among undocumented immigrants), even those who met the criteria are not able to prove their eligibility.
- Residents who live in some communities in Urbana but outside of the district boundaries (e.g., Ivanhoe mobile park) are considered ineligible to apply.
- Scholarships cover only two children (many parents from large families were reluctant to apply for only two children knowing that their other kids would not be able to participate).
- The need to plan in advance. One of the interviewees also brought up an issue that he had to wait after the program had started to find out if the scholarship for his child has been granted.
- Even though the scholarship covered a large part of the fee, the price that had to be paid was still cost-prohibitive.

*[Asked if they are using UPD scholarships] "Yes. We have received full scholarships. The scholarship helps us a lot. If you're a single parent, or not even a single parent, if your income is not at a certain amount, then I think that would be kind of expensive." (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*[Talking about the benefits of scholarships] "Because of the scholarships, I have recruited several children that would normally not be able to play (the interviewer is a coach for the UPD). They're hardworking people, they just don't have the money to do those things, so then this gives them ability. Those scholarship programs are crucial [but] a lot of people aren't speaking up because it takes a lot of courage to ask for help, and that's what we need to encourage more. If people don't want to ask for help and they don't have the money to do this, so then their kid just sits. [It would be important to] Get a word out about that and tell them, 'It's okay. Don't worry about it. Let's just get it done.'" (Oscar, AA, U)*

*"I have utilized the scholarship until I was told that I moved outside of city limits or something. So I wasn't able to utilize that, which I didn't realize that that was an issue considering that still I'm an Urbana resident. That was a big thing for me, and my kids haven't really been involved in anything since then because I can't afford to put them in the camps that I would like them to participate in or the different*



*recreational activities that the district offers. I understand to a certain extent, but I feel like it stops a lot of kids from participating in their programs.” (Daphne, AA, U)*

*“I know someone who applied for the scholarship and the process is a little overwhelming because they do not give you an immediate answer. You have to do it with a lot of time in advance. I think they have a planning mentality which, I do not want to generalize, but Latinos are not used to planning. Besides, another thing is that it only covers children, but if you have a mom with small children, you have to pay for your entrance.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*“For example here, (points at the scholarship application) says you have to provide proof of residency. What I mean is that not a lot of people have it. Many times people do not apply simply because ...” (Gabriela, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “(interrupts) proof of residence?” What does it refer to?” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “It’s for people who live in Urbana, but people can misunderstand.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U) [Interviewer: Do you think it would put people off?] “Yeah!” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*“Another thing is that there are many people who do not have proof of income because they get paid in cash at their job... they always ask you for check stubs here. There is no way you can apply for this thing (referring to the scholarship).” (Gabriela, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

## **b. Transportation**

Transportation problem was mentioned by a number of African American, Asian, and Latino interviewees. It was particularly pronounced among African American and Latino women on fixed incomes who did not have cars and who struggled to afford a bus ticket. One of the African American older female interviewees commented that because of the number of children in her care, taking a bus to a recreation center was not an option. Several Asian interviewees who were recent arrivals to the United States commented that they were afraid of driving in the United States and were reluctant to ask for favors from their friends and family members every time they wanted to take their children to programs and other activities. Transportation barrier also affected people who had problems finding parking areas in the vicinity of one park (Lincoln side of Kings Park) and others who were concerned about crossing busy streets to get to another park (Crystal Lake Park).

*“People don’t have cars. Some people have one car... you know you need it for work.” (AA female, N-U)*

*“And the bus [costs] too” (AA female, N-U)*

*“Since I don’t have a car, that for me to get around it’s like more difficult, so if it’s not close to me, then I won’t go.” (Jane, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I don’t have a car. Just to picture me on a bus with eight grandkids!” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

*“I do not have a car. [Interviewer: How do you usually go to the services or the facilities?] We go with my husband, my father-in-law, or with a friend.” (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*“I’m afraid of the high speed so I don’t drive. I have no car so we often went to parks in friends’ car, such as Meadowbrook and Crystal Lake Park and Brookens.” (Poppi, AS, China, U)*

*“I live by Crystal Lake but I don’t even want to walk there because I have to cross a big street and there’s no bus that takes me there. I’d like go but the bus will take me around even though it’s closer for me to walk.” (Jane, AS, China, N-U)*

*“The Lincoln side [of Kings Park], there’s no entrance. I don’t know where to park my car either, but I know that park. I know that there’re some festivals that were held there. There were advertisements for it.” (Lin, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I think part of it, especially for people who work full-time or even for people who ride the bus a lot... that proximity is critical to getting kids active.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

**c. Lack of knowledge of opportunities/communication between the UPD and residents**

Lack of information was primarily cited as a constraint on participation by the African American residents of the Lierman community and by Asian American students and visiting scholars.

*[Replying to interviewer’s question if the UPD does a good job advertising their programs] “No, I don’t even know that they had open gym here for the kids to come play ball, so no. They don’t make us aware of anything. Even as far as keeping the parents aware about that program like -- no, they’re not doing a good job at all.” (Karina, AA, N-U)*

*“Communication is the main issue [in terms of the reputation of the UPD] (Jill, AA, N-U) “Yes, that’s the main barrier right there” (Roger, AA, N-U)*

*“Like here, we’ve got a whole gymnastic stadium right next door [referring to Brookens Gym] and I have not yet heard anything about it, anything for the kids to come in, nothing about it.” (female, AA, N-U)*

*[The interviewer talks about programs offered at Brookens Gym] “I know nothing. I mean -- so do we have programs like that? Games? In here? They don’t know nothing*

*about that. [Answering a question about why people from Lierman are not using UPD programs] “They don’t know nothing about them. Maybe they’ll think they’re not allowed over here [Brookens Gym]. [Describing people’s perceptions of the Brookens Gym] They think it’s for... help with the birth certificate, driver’s license, stuff like that. Because I don’t see no big sign for public. They just think it’s for business. They don’t know it’s for kids too.” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

*“Actually for me, I’m a student and I don’t even know that there are parks here. All I know is that there is a Japan House behind my apartment, that’s all I know.” (Zainab, AS, Iraq, N-U)*

*“Other than Meadowbrook and Crystal Lake Park, I didn’t know that there was all these other parks there, unless I make a conscious effort, do my own research and find out about it. A lot of these parks are kind of small. I live right by Kings Park and literally, I have never stepped foot in it, even though I live right by it, because all I see is the Kings Park sign outside and this dark road going in. So I don’t know what’s inside. I don’t know -- and there’s nobody around, so I’m afraid like, ‘What’s in there?’ ...I if you have the opportunity with kids, it’s like you would go find a park to have picnic in. But if I don’t have a family, then I don’t really have motivation (Lin, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I think there’s a lot of visiting scholars like me, living here and ... I’m only studying here for one year, so maybe there is no time for us to understand all of this information.” (Wang, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I would like to go out more. I just don’t know where to go. There are some [parks] that I wanted to go to but I couldn’t find them (talks about the Weber Park with the archery range). It was a small one, I couldn’t find it. I was like, ‘Okay. I’m not going to keep looking. I’m just going to stop.’ [Asked about constraints to using UPD facilities] “Cost, locations, I honestly didn’t know that they have a gym. Do they have a gym? [Asked if he knows where the Brookens Gym is] “I thought that was part of the jail, like an underage jail, something like that.” (Angel, LAT, Puerto Rico, N-U)*

#### **d. Language barrier**

Language barrier was frequently mentioned by Latino interviewees and by recently arrived international students from Asia. Even though the flyers distributed through schools were bilingual, many of the interviewed Latino non-users claimed they were only in English.

*“Especially for Chinese ... we learn English from maybe seven or eight years old, but unfortunately, we can’t speak very well. It is not easy for us to write or to read either.” (Wang, AS, China, N-U)*

*“Yes, because at first, we have a barrier of language so we couldn’t catch all the meaning. At first, because our language is not English...to grasp all the information offered page by page (talking about the program guide), sometimes we miss some programs. So if there would be a table in front, organized by children’s age, we could go to a table to find the good programs.” (Poppi, AS, China, U)*

*[Interviewer: And have they – workers at the UPD-- spoken to you in English or Spanish?] “Well, truthfully, it's a bunch of people that only speak English.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) [Interviewer: And when you go, who translates for you?] Although we speak broken English, they understand (laughs)” (Itzel, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*[Interviewer: Do you speak English?] “Very little. [Interviewer: So, when you go to the office and ask for information about the programs do you have difficulty communicating?] Yes. But I can almost always get my point across. [Interviewer: Have they treated you well and been sensitive to your struggles?] Yes, the staff try to understand me.” (Francisca, LAT, Chile, U)*

*“When I see it (the brochure) in English I say ‘it's very expensive!’ and set it aside.” (Diana, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“Another thing, I’m referring to the catalog, they have nothing in Spanish. The one I have is entirely in English. So, there is no way (for me to read it). One has to ask, look at the squares, and try to get an idea of what there is. [Interviewer: When you’ve gone to the UPD facilities, have they been understanding of the fact that you may not speak English very well?] (laughs) Sometimes. You know, it depends on the people. Usually the ones that are there (working in the pool) are young boys and young girls who are doing their job, but if you don’t speak English it's your problem, right? They try the best to help you, but if you do not speak English there is no way they can help you. Fortunately, I bumped into my child's teacher, she speaks Spanish. I asked her if she could help me because I didn’t understand the (swimming) levels. I told her if she could ask them and she kindly, before starting the class, went and asked the boys. The boys told her and she told me.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)*

Language barrier was particularly problematic in case of on-line registration and making phone calls (a number of interviewees commented that there was nobody at the UPD who could communicate with them in Spanish when they called for information). In addition, lack of computer skills and the necessity to use credit cards to make on-line payments and reservations restricted the ability of some people (particularly undocumented immigrants who did not have credit cards) from registering on-line.

*“I believe that another important point is that first is the barrier in English and then it is the use of computers. What I have seen is that you are asked to register online or by phone. So like, if I have problems with the language, online is worse because they assume that you have a credit card and that you have a type of electronic form of payment that many Latinos do not have.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

#### **e. Lack of credit cards**

The issue of overreliance on credit cards and inability of people to register over the phone due to lack of credit cards was brought up by a number of Latino interviewees.

*“If they demand electronic payment they are assuming that people have social security or something that can identify them ... ‘cash’ makes you more invisible.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*“Does the park district accept cash payments?” (Hilda, LAT, N-U) “Yes, they do” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “But most of the time they force you (to use credit cards) because I called and they told me to register through the website or give the card information, because otherwise, you cannot reserve the space.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U) “I always go to the office directly and if I pay cash.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

#### **f. Safety**

Safety issue as a barrier to recreation and to using UPD facilities and parks was mentioned on a number of occasions. It particularly affected three groups of people – residents of the Lierman community or those who had to cross unsafe neighborhoods to access recreation areas, some of the Muslim immigrants who were concerned about anti-Muslim sentiments at the time of the presidential election, and undocumented Latino immigrants who expressed fears of deportation.

- **Safety issue in parts of Urbana**

Fear of crime was articulated by all of the interviewed residents of the Lierman community. The interviewees revealed a fear of spending time outdoors and walking within the community (even from the local bus stop to their apartment buildings). At the same time, many commented that recreation programs were needed to “keep local kids out of trouble” and to provide them with healthy and constructive things to do. Residents’ fears were aggravated by the shooting that took place a few weeks prior to the interview.

*[Responding to a question – are you concerned about your kids’ playing after dark?] “Yes. This boy just got shot at 8:30 at night, a thousand feet away from my door. So yes, we’re scared. We’re traumatized. I had just walked into my house two minutes before he got shot. ” (AA woman, N-U)*

*“Every day we play football with the little kids because there is no other place for them to go, especially there are no other safe places, and our home is not even safe.” (AA female, N-U)*

*“It’s not safe here, it’s dark out there, there’s no light out there (talking about the sidewalk from the bus stop to the apartment buildings) ... It’s dark and it’s scary.” (AA female, N-U)*

*“The bus stop ... when we head to the apartments right there, you couldn’t even stand at the bus stop because they’re right in the way.” (male, AA, U)*

*[Interviewee talking about the importance of providing programs for kids] “You know, keep the kids out of trouble because there’s so much shooting over here lately.” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

One of the local community leaders narrated the history of the crime problem in the community:

*[Describing the crime problem at Lierman] “Well, some of them maybe move in and when you have all of these different people at the same time, they are not worrying about their neighbors no more, it’s just how many friends we can bring at one place and do what we want to do. People started coming in and the older people, the majority of people who made this their home, just started backing away because we see these young guys on a corner and they just want to hang on the corner over here. And all of it started going down and it started to get bad and fights started breaking out. We’re like prisoners in our own little place right now. It started [happening] between 2008 and maybe 2010 to 2011. They had a gang of guys on this corner, they would come right in the yard and setup right there. [Showing to the interviewer an area within a couple of feet from his front door]. Yeah, right here, in the yard, right here! Most of this summer, we’ve been having problems with all these guys, they just disrupt everything we do. I can’t understand why you would you come over here to disrupt the way we live! These people hang on the corner, drink, throw bottles everywhere, go relieve themselves. The kids don’t feel safe going nowhere but in front of their own houses. [Describing the shooting that happened in the Lierman community in September 2016] Yesterday, they finally took all the memorial stuff for the guy. I don’t know what they gave him a memorial for [it was] the worst guy, he would walk around, asking for somebody to do or something, so somebody just obliged to him. He was going to kill somebody, because he was that bad. [Interviewer: He was from here?] No, no, no. He hung over here when he wanted to do some crime. He beat up guys out here and he burglarized a couple of houses on the corner. He was just that guy that got what he was looking for.” (Jerry, AA, N-U)*

As a result of the shooting and a growing crime rate in general, Jerry and a few other residents wrote a petition to the Urbana City Council that the Urbana Police Department asking the City and the Aspen Court’s current owner to develop a safety plan to improve the living conditions for the residents. As a result of the petition, the following changes have been implemented in the Lierman community around the time of the interview:

- The camera system has been repaired and the cameras began to record all the activity around the apartment complex.
- A security firm was hired to patrol the property throughout the day and the evening. The security company has been given directions to immediately contact the Urbana Police if they see any suspicious activity and to ban individuals who are on the property without permission.
- Ivanhoe Way on the south side of the complex has been closed off which allowed for only one entry and one exit for vehicles to the property. This allowed to control vehicle traffic and monitor license plates of all vehicles that enter the property.
- A “ban list” has been developed that excluded certain individuals from the property.
- The Urbana Police Department has increased their presence on the site with more patrols, both marked cars and unmarked to ensure the safety of the residents.
- Community residents have been made responsible for their guests. If the visitors cause damage to the property, are involved in criminal act or do anything that endangers the safety of the residents, their acquaintances are to be terminated from their lease and could be subject to arrest for their involvement.

Not only the residents of Lierman, but also some of the student residents of Orchard Downs community expressed concerns about safety. Their fears were aggravated by Campus Safety Notices distributed by the UIUC via e-mail. One of the notices alerted the residents to an armed robbery that took place in the south parking lot in September of 2016. Both Wang and Mohammad made a reference to the event:

*[After that incident] “We didn’t go out later than 6:00PM.” (Weng, AS, China, N-U). “They had a gun and the person was just coming out of the car; [they] pulled the gun, took everything, and walked away. And it’s very interesting, in these apartments, there’re a lot of police who live here. Still, they dare to come here.” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“When I just want to go from the bus stop to my apartment, I just run, run, run!” (Zainab, AS, Iraq, N-U)*

Opinions on whether Urbana parks are safe were divided among the interviewees. While some participants believed that they were “completely safe,” mentioned walking in the Meadowbrook Park even after the sunset, and allowing their children to play in the parks unsupervised, others expressed concern about homeless people and lack of lighting at night.

*“I drove by the West Side Park...I mean I don’t have anything against homeless people, but they’re all over that park and it’s very intimidating. Let’s say you have small children and you want to bring them there to play, but you don’t know who the other person is. I think they’re sleeping -- some of them are sleeping there too, right?” (Lin, AS, N-U)*

*“I try to run at Carle Park and I just didn’t feel safe and I was like, ‘This is too stressful.’ So I went to Meadowbrook Park. Actually, Meadowbrook Park has a specific runway, lap sort of thing, so there’re people there all the time walking and running, so you feel a little bit better.” (Alice, AS, China N-U)*

*“I think that they do a really good job of having lights and trimming the trees so when it’s dusk, you can still see the paths. I think people self-police too. If they see something going on, they help kids out and things like that. So I think it’s vital to have that and keep maintaining it. Don’t think, ‘Oh, we’re better than Champaign because we haven’t had a shooting.’ You see all these kids and you know the kids and they know you; if anything happens, you know you can get help for somebody. So, we love it because it’s a safe place where people can gather.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

*[Do you feel safe in the parks?] “I do. I can only say for Meadowbrook Park during the high peak season for the Pokemon GO. I went to the Meadowbrook by myself (at night) and I felt pretty safe.” (Jessica, AS, China, U)*

- **Religious profiling**

A couple of international students from predominantly Muslim countries expressed concern about racial profiling and fear of being attacked. Their fears were aggravated by an anti-Muslim discourse in some of the media in the wake of the presidential campaign and the safety-related working they were receiving from the local mosque.

*“Recently, during the Friday prayer, I heard there will be a training in the mosque. The police will come and they will give a presentation to the women especially that if there’s any sort of situation how you can tackle that, respond to that. Some of the guidelines [that we received] are ‘Don’t walk alone. Go with a crowd. Don’t go to the areas which are like notorious or something.’ With this election and all that, this is becoming more popular. I mean I think there was one letter to the mosque where somebody wrote a letter with some threats or something. It happened recently, that was on this Friday. But really, Muslim is a minority that has concerns.” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*[Asked if they are concerned about being profiled – the interviewee is Muslim] “I think it depends on the location of the park, where the park is. For example for me, if I’m going to the Carle Park which is right in the neighborhood, surrounded by the houses, I see a lot of families play there, kids playing there, I don’t feel that there will be hate crime or somebody will be following me or something. But, at the same time, if I’m in some remote corner of -- maybe the Meadowbrook Park which is a little bit far off naturally I might have some concerns.” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan N-U) [Interviewer: Do you think more men or women are being concerned?] “Women” (Alice, AS, China, N-U), “Women, yeah” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*



Mohammad's views, however, were not shared by Zainab from Iraq and Putri from Indonesia who did not express any concerns about their safety.

- **Immigration-related fears**

A number of Latino interviewees also expressed concerns related to the possibility of deportation of undocumented immigrants in the wake of the US presidential election. The following exchange took place during the focus group with Latino non-users.

*[Interviewer: Are you concerned about immigration agents?] "They don't come here!" (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) "What do you mean?! I have seen them many times in the Progreso store." (Gabriela, LAT, Mexico, N-U) "Only for those they have to collect ... But when someone sees the immigration agents the gossip starts." (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) "I am afraid that they will deport my husband, who is from Ecuador." (Itzel, LAT, Mexico, N-U) "My husband saw them [immigration agents]. They asked him if he knew a person and they showed him the picture." (Diana, LAT, Mexico, N-U) "But they didn't tell him anything?" (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) "Even if the person knows the person they are looking for, they aren't going to say anything." (Itzel, LAT, Mexico, N-U) "I think the children are more worried. My son started asking me if we had any problems with Trump. We have a visa, but we can still have problems ... It has affected the children more." (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U) "Yes, my children are scared. My child is the one who asks me if we are going to go to Mexico. He says 'I do not want to go to Mexico mom' (Diana, LAT, Mexico, N-U) [Interviewer: Were your children born here?] "Yes, but they're small, so if I go (back to Mexico) I'll take them with me." (Diana, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*"She says that her child, he's got some insecurities, on Tuesday night he went to bed, he came several times at night to see if his dad was there, feeling for him. He now sleepwalks and checks that dad is there at night." (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

Fear among the undocumented immigrants made them reluctant to interact with any agencies perceived to be affiliated with the government which could possibly bring attention to their undocumented status (e.g., apply for scholarships from the UPD).

*[Asked if Brookens Gym would be considered a "safe space" for Latinos] "Outside it would be. Because we have the soccer field that they use for adult soccer for men. That's completely a safe space. [Interviewer: Why do you say that outside will be considered as safe space but not the inside?] Because people know it, they've been there. [Inside of the building...] Well, it's hard to find and you'll never know. Why would I know what's here?" (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

## **f. Racial tensions**

### **• Perception of interracial tension in Urbana**

Views of the interviewees on the issue of interracial tension in the communities and within the UPD programs were mixed. A sizable portion of the participants believed that interracial tensions existed within Urbana, although the majority of participants claimed they have not personally experienced many overt acts of discrimination. One of the participants raised an issue of strained relations between the local African American community and police:

*“All the drama and stuff that’s going on with the police, this is going to harm even the police too nowadays.... But, at the same time, they’re all we got as far as protection in my [neighborhood]” (AA female, N-U)*

Other interviewees commented on the interracial tension among different ethnic and racial groups in the community.

*“There’s racial tension everywhere. I’m an African-American person and it happens to me all the time. [The place] where we moved, they didn’t appreciate who we were as a family. So I have experienced racism upfront because people judge you right off the bat. I’m an athlete, I’m a pretty big guy, I’m black, I’m big. So it’s one of those things where people are attentive to see [who this person is]. That’s also the flipside of Urbana. Urbana is a very open community. They love people. So I’ve also experienced some of the nicest people you will ever meet.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*“I live between Philo with Florida, but I know that if I cross Philo it is no longer safe. There are many fights between African Americans and Mexicans. I feel that the African Americans look at me like ‘what are you doing here’? [Interviewer: Why do you think there is racial tension?] I believe it’s a fight between who is the majority and who is the minority.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*[Asked if racial tensions are an issue in the community] “Yeah, because if we saw you all [white interviewers] walking down the street [we] would be like, ‘Why are they over here? What is going on?’” (AA female, N-U)*

*[Asked if what’s going on now is going to affect how people are using community resources] “I’m pretty sure. One lady was outside Walmart, just in the parking lot, [and she sees] a Latina lady walking out crying and then [she’s] trying to comfort her just as another human being, ‘Are you okay?’ The lady in Walmart had been cut off and told by somebody else to get the hell out of there; that she had no place there. She wouldn’t let her pay for her purchases at Walmart....When somebody tells it to somebody else so very negatively, how do you respond? How do you defend yourself?” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*[Interviewer: What are the relations among people in the community right now?]*  
*“Bad, very bad. A lot of things have already changed. For example, where my husband works, his employer was a very nice man and as soon as Trump won and heard him speak Spanish he told him ‘I don’t want anyone to speak Spanish in my building.’” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“They say that the worst enemy of a Mexican is another Mexican who thinks he’s White.” (Gabriela, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

- **Interracial tension within the UPD programs and facilities**

Reports of interracial tensions within the UPD programs and facilities were very rare. One of the interviewed African American ladies referred to the perception that Black children may not be welcome in the UPD facilities and another interviewee (a coach for the UPD) talked about cases of “microaggression” that he attributed to the lack of adequate cultural training among some of the coaching staff.

*[Describing of why people at Brookens Gym may not look favorably at African American children visiting the center]* *“They really don’t want them over there anyway because maybe, it’s too many blacks, I don’t know. Maybe they think that if there’s a whole bunch of these little black kids around in this neighborhood come there, they’re going to start something, you know what I’m saying?” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

*[Have you ever witnessed any interracial conflict during Park District programs or at the Park District sites?]* *“It’s probably more micro aggressions. I think that even coaches are not fully understanding of the language of the kids so they might yell out a name to get the kids’ [attention] and then laugh about it when two or three kids might turn their heads, ‘Oh, I forgot everyone’s called...’ because parents are sitting there too and other people are standing there, and the people are laughing, you know, somebody is being impacted by that.” (Marcus, AA, U)*

None of the remaining 21 users who were interviewed in the study has witnessed or experienced any interracial tensions during UPD programs or been exposed to any mistreatment from the UPD staff. Comments like this were very common:

*“No arguments no fights” (female, AA, U); “I never heard about nobody talking bad” (female, AA, U); “Never, and I’ve been to all these parks” (female, AA, U); “No. The volunteering stuff, never, never had a problem with the volunteers, nothing, soccer, baseball, tee-ball.” (female, AA, U)*

The majority of the participants talked about the welcoming atmosphere within the UPD facilities and praised the professionalism of the UPD staff.

*“(Employee 10) is a great ambassador. (Employee 10) made it happen, he worked hard, he did whatever he could, he was welcoming. You guys just made it very easy*

*to be part of a program. (Employee 10) is very professional and very good. And then I've met other people in the facility because they're at the Brookens building. Every time I'm going there, everyone is super nice.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*“I think we're very fortunate because [we've been using UPD] programs 16 years now and I don't think we've had an instance where it's a racial issue. But sometimes you have conflicts and usually they'll send an e-mail, 'Okay something happened at the camp and this is how we approached it.' I think they are trained very well to resolve conflict. I mean, I've had racial things said to me in different context in Champaign-Urbana so I don't think it's something where you never have it. But at least from the Park District perspective, because they have the expectation for any program, like if you do something offensive or you do something out of line whether it's in the park or in the program, then they can remove your privileges.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

#### **g. Lack of time / scheduling conflicts**

Lack of time as a constraint to participation in the UPD programs was mentioned by a number of interviewees who held multiple jobs, had large number of dependents in their care, whose children participated in a variety of other recreational activities, who devoted much time to volunteering within the community, and by graduate students busy with their classes, dissertation work and research projects. Several participants also reported that the UPD programs in which they desired to participate were offered at times that did not fit their schedules.

*“I can never have 'leisure.' I have eight kids and 27 grandkids. I have kids down here (in her apartment) and I help them with their homework. They are in high school. We play school in the house.” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

*“It's just because I am really busy because I have three jobs. Yeah, I'm really busy with that.” (Putri, AS, Indonesia, N-U)*

*“[Lack of time] that's a big part of it because I'm coaching and that takes two or three hours and we have practices a couple of times a week. So four teams of eight hours a week and then we play all the games on Saturday, so I'm on four games on Saturday. So it's a lot of work for me.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*“[Lack of time] could be some of it. We're pretty active in other parts of the community as well. So, getting them into two things would be a little bit more challenging for us. Just a lot of things don't fit our schedule.” (Marcus, AA, U)*

*“My classes end at four or five, sometimes at six, so there's no time for me to go the park.” (Zainab, AS, Iraq, N-U)*

*"I've heard positive [things about the UPD] in general, but I think the [program] schedules are kind of complicated when one has to work." (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*[Interviewer: What keeps you from participating in more activities?] "Time, the activities schedules, and I do not have a car. Because sometimes the program schedules are very early and my baby, since he is very small, I can't get him up so early." (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*"The only thing would be time. For now, the programs I used have worked with my schedule... I have wanted different classes for myself, but yes, the times are ... For example, sports for adults or exercise like zumba, or yoga, they aren't very flexible because they're around noon ... Usually one works from eight to two, so those times aren't very convenient." (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)*

#### **h. Dissatisfaction with the level of instruction and (lack of) competitiveness of the programs**

The fact that the UPD programs were not competitive enough and that the instruction was not provided at the level desired by the children's parents was a concern to almost all Asian interviewees and one Latina participant.

*"I want to talk about the ballet lesson. Because in swimming lesson, I think they have class, so they can develop their ability quickly because they have to pass the grade, their target. But in ballet lesson, I don't think they're developing skills and I don't think they have the target for the class, for the session. And I saw in Champaign Park District, they have performance -- ballet performance, but I don't see it in here. Maybe it's only in the end of the session for the families so we can come and watch them? Like a recital?" (Helen, AS, China, U)*

*"We have a much more diverse population in Champaign-Urbana and people are coming from different countries and they may think, 'Well, if I pay a fee, I get more -- this is a competitive team; as long as my kid puts in the time, they're going to excel and be able to be part of maybe a league team. [But], to be honest, the programs for children are more for leisure and to get them excited about exercising. If you want competition, then you would pull your kid out and do a club sport like we did for volleyball, because the way that they do it is really getting them interested, usually for beginners.'" (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

*"I tried so many, many (swimming) lessons and I was disappointed; ballet class, I was disappointed. Why? Because I feel the quality wasn't there. We were so disappointed to the point that we did not want to pursue. So if we want high quality for swimming, for ballet, we have to go with a professional in town. But then, looking back, had we known all these (that the goal of the classes was to introduce children to activities and have fun), we would feel nothing but thankful. We wouldn't be disappointed." (Nan, AS, Thailand, U)*

**i. Perception that most UPD programs are family-oriented, that there are not many opportunities for single people**

The perception among many Asian interviewees was that the majority of programs offered by the UPD are family-oriented and not geared toward single members of the community. A number of both female and male participants mentioned that they would feel “intimidated” attending programs or events on their own. Several interviewees recommended that “learning classes” (e.g., cooking, baking, painting) would be particularly interesting to single adults.

*“I didn’t know anybody else who was going there (to a festival in a park). I wanted to meet my neighbors and get an idea of who’s living in my neighborhood but I just felt kind of intimidated to go to that event. I didn’t know who else was going to be there. As a single person, I want to see some activities for learning -- like the Parkland thing. If something similar to that was available for people without families it would be great.” (Jane, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I think that the students here who are bachelors, for them, there aren't many activities. So if the Park District focuses on them, maybe organizes some of activities for them, they will come” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“[Reviewing the UPD program guide] “This is not appealing for a single person who’s very busy, like a busy scholar.” (Alice, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I just went through the material (program guide) and I was noticing that many activities were for kids, like camping and something like that. So I thought maybe it’s not for me.” (Mahnoor, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“The Phillips Recreational Center... I take classes there. It’s really good for me. But I’m thinking for somebody that’s single, who didn’t have family, like fitness and hobbies and things to learn would be great, like cooking class or baking classes.” (Alice, AA, China, U)*

**j. Lack of room in the UPD programs / popular programs being overcrowded**

Two of the interviewees indicated that they tried to sign up for some of the UPD programs but that interesting classes filled up pretty quickly. Moreover, they became dissuaded by how many people attended some of the yoga sessions in the park.

*“Some events fill up pretty quickly depending on the activity or whatever they have going on at the Urbana Park District. So, if you manage to sign up, you will be able to attend, but if not, then those slots will be filled and you can’t.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*“Yoga in the park in the summer is a great activity for single people on Saturday mornings. But it’s only held in one park and when I went there a couple of times,*

*there're so many people there, you can't even hear the instructor giving out instructions. There's one instructor for like 50 people. They have all these other parks...why don't they have yoga in park at these other places? If you see there's a large amount of people that are interested, you need to ... do more of it in other areas."* (Alice, AS, China, N-U)

#### **k. Lack of child care**

Lack of child care as a constraint on using UPD recreation programs was cited by a number of African American, Asian and Latino mothers and grandmothers. Women's advice on how to lower this barrier ranged from providing parallel activities for children, other forms of child care to rescheduling the programs.

*One thing makes it difficult. I have a baby and sometimes I don't have anyone to take care of him while I do the activity; that makes it difficult for me."* (Francisca, LAT, Chile, U)

*"Sometimes they are in the middle of the day, for example, yoga classes, Zumba, and all of that. [Interviewer: And the middle of the day doesn't work?] No, because who will take care of my baby? [Interviewer: So day care problems?] Yes."* (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)

*[Asked if the UPD offered childcare would you be interested in participating in some programs?] "Absolutely."* (Daphne, AA, U)

### **3. What are the benefits of participation in recreation programs offered by the Urbana Park District to the minority adults and youth?**

Interviewed program participants and parents of youth who participated in the programs were asked "Why do you participate in programs offered by UPD (why do you sign up your children for UPD programs)?" "What do you think you and your family get out of participation in recreation programs offered by UPD?" and "When you think about signing up your children for UPD programs, what are you looking for in the programs?" The most often mentioned benefits of program participation included: an ability to interact with children of other ethnic and racial backgrounds and to learn about other cultures; health and being active; socialization/spending time with friends and meeting new people; establishing contacts with other parents; learning the language; developing children's interests; distraction from technology; stress reduction / relaxation; safety; and child-care function of the programs.

**a. Interacting with children of other ethnic and racial backgrounds and learning about other cultures**

Exposing children to new cultures and peers from other racial and ethnic groups were some of the most often mentioned reasons why parents wanted their children to participate in the UPD programs. Some parents cited “preparation for future life in a diverse society” and others “getting along with different races,” while Asian immigrant parents were hoping participation in UPD programs would help their children learn about the American culture.

*“[Exposure to] a new culture... -- you learn more when you’re around kids [of different backgrounds]” (Thom, AA, U)*

*[When you think about signing up your children for UPD programs, what are you looking for in the programs?] “My kids being involved with other kids and learning new things and that’s how kids learn how to get along with different races and different cultures... that’s how kids are flexible with whom they play with and then they meet new friends. Then they start having playmates with other people. They learn about other things besides just what we do with our family.” (Samantha, AA, U)*

*“You got to teach your kid to get along with everybody. And not about is it Black or a White thing, it’s an ‘all of us thing,’ it’s a ‘me’ thing.” (female, AA, U)*

*“I definitely think diversity is important. That is something that I think is important to me for them to interact with other cultures.” (Daphne, AA, U)*

*“I think it is important to broaden the perspective of a person. Even I like to socialize with people from other cultures because the people from Pakistan, I know them. Yeah, what are their habits and what their thinking is?” (Mahnoor, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*[Do your friends who use UPD programs like the UPD offering?] “They do because most of the international student, they come with families and children. And usually, the children who are at the very young age, like the elementary school, they need more activities to introduce about the culture in America.” (Putri, AS, Indonesia, N-U)*

*“When cultures can interact, it’s always a positive experience. It’s funny when you watch people; people cheer and celebrate in so many different ways. I saw a lot of diverse people. I had kids that never played basketball, from other nationalities and made some great friends. The epitome of the program is to connect people and that’s what you got to do. Make them so comfortable because racial tensions are high.... We’re going to meet as many people as we can, we’re going to talk to people, we’re going to look them in the eye and tell ‘we love you, we’re here to help you. You’re in our community you’re an American, we’re going to be here for you, and that’s what we need to do.’ Every community across United States needs to become one and*



*that's how you do it by interacting with other cultures, meeting new people, embracing another people, embracing some differences and embracing some pros and cons.” (Oscar, AA, U, UPD coach)*

## **b. Health, being active**

The second most often mentioned benefit of participation in UPD programs was maintaining health and active lifestyle. Health benefits of participation were particularly important to African American and Latino users.

*“I want them [kids] to remain involved and live a healthy lifestyle and being active. Myself too, I want to keep myself healthy.” (Nelson, AA, U)*

*“I personally like for my children to be active. My goal for my children is to keep them active and keep them busy.” (Daphne, AA, U)*

*“If my middle child stops going to swimming for two weeks, he gains weight and when he starts to go he loses. So that's why I try to pay every month so he doesn't stop going; I know it helps him a lot.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“It is beneficial because one teaches them from a young age that they need to remain active.” (Gabriela, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“The truth is ... I like it because I only spend time in the house because of the baby, so it's like an entertainment. [To reduce] stress, depression.” (Francisca, LAT, Chile, U)*

*“Because my son likes to swim, but also to keep him healthy ... I also have him in soccer to keep him in better physical condition.” (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)*

*“First, for him to be healthy and practice some sport. Here, generally, the food one finds in the supermarket isn't very good. The vegetables are very expensive, so for us, we are accustomed to eating well, eating healthy, and doing sports. I don't have but a single son, and I want him to be healthy and to continue doing his sports as he was doing back in my country.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U).*

## **c. Socialization, spending time with friends, meeting new people**

An important reason parents wanted to sign up their children for the UPD programs was for them to meet new people and to interact with their friends. Some also recounted that their children were less concerned about the programs they attended than the friends they got to interact with year after year.

*“I'm looking for them (children) to interact with other children outside of kids they may know at school. (Daphne, A, U)*

*“We really like the variety of the Summer Arts Program. We ended up having friends. At the time, we live in Champaign but we were attending UPD programs and we had friends who lived in Urbana. And so my son had friends from the other school district who would also participate in the summer programs and they spend the most time with each other when they would meet up each summer. When he was in the first grade, he would see his friends and then they see each other next year. For him, it was more of a social thing versus the camp; like he wanted to go because his friends were going, and not so much because of what it was.” (Laura, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*“The number one thing I want them (children) to get out of that (participation) is interaction (and) meeting other people. They love meeting people. They’re the best friend makers.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*“People get to meet each other; the kids can meet each other. There is not necessarily that many free activities where kids can mingle.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

#### **d. Establishing contacts with other parents**

Not only children participating in the UPD programs were able to meet new friends and reconnect with the old ones, but their parents also established new connections while attending their games.

*“I’ve made a lot of friends from parents of other kids because they play with my kids, so I really make good friends.” (Nelson, AA, U)*

*“I have a lot of interaction with parents and families all the time. That’s the most favorite part of that. That’s one of the main reason we participate, that we meet a lot of families and we can help people (Oscar, AA, U, UPD coach)*

*“I have made friends because I’m there with my kid when we hang out and we’re cheering for the same thing, and we end up asking each other a little more. No friends to bring home yet, but now we’re acquainted with each other.” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*[Says that she would like to see more Latinos in the UPD activities. Asked “why?”]  
“Well, because I’m alone with my husband and I have no family. I do not know many people and since I am a student, I don’t have friends here; I just started meeting people, but I don’t know the Latino community, so I would like to see Latinos where I can interact with them. Because of the language, because you feel more confident when you see another Latinos who speak your own language, get your jokes, the dynamics are different than with White people.” (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)*

#### **e. Distraction from technology**

A common concern among the interviewed parents was that their children spend too much time at home in front of the TVs and computers, and are preoccupied with video games and cell phones. UPD programs provided a much needed distraction and allowed their children to spend time on physically active pastimes and outdoor games.

*“I think, like most parents, we need them busy. We want them out of the house, less screen time. We want them to learn something.” (Carlos, LAT, U)*

*“I don’t like my kids just being at house playing video games because they all have those things. But you can only play the X-box so long; you can only be on the Wi-Fi so long; you only could jump on the trampolines so long. You know, it helps them to learn how to engage and that’s important.” (AA female, U)*

*“Technology is really big, so I want them to still be kids and not just with phone and TV and Netflix, and all of those things. I want them to be familiar with other stuff.” (Daphne, AA, U)*

*“My son plays soccer and has trophies and medals because he loves to go. The sport more than anything is good. It is better for children to be involved in these activities instead of being at home watching TV or playing with the tablet.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“The issue here is that schools end very early, and if they do not have an extra activity they go to the computer.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

#### **f. Learning the language**

An opportunity to learn a new language was mentioned by a number of the Latino and Asian program participants. In particular, Asian students and visiting scholars commented that involvement in recreation activities helped their children learn English language, while second generation Latino parents saw the opportunity for their children to interact with Latino kids and retain and/or polish their Spanish as an important asset.

*[Commenting about her Indonesian friends whose children attend UPD activities]*  
*“Because they are international and the kids, they usually use their national language (at home), and then, as soon as they are here, they learn English from TV and school but they also learn it when they get more activities, especially during the summer when they don’t have any school. That’s why that pamphlet (activity guide) really helps them because there are so many activities that Urbana Park District offers.” (Putri, AS, Indonesia, N-U)*

*“Some of them [Latino kids in Urbana] have weak Spanish. They prefer English and it’s just that our local Latino population is maturing. We have very few newcomers.” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*“Our house is bilingual. We speak English and Spanish in the house, but Spanish is weak and so the kids they’re losing their Spanish...He (son) prefers English so, he would rather be on a mixed team and we would rather put him on a Spanish team, because the retention of who we are depends on him keeping ties.” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

#### **g. Stress reduction / relaxation**

Several Latina interviewees indicated that they participated in the UPD programs to release stress and relax. This motivation for participation, however, was not mentioned by the African American or Asian participants.

*“You go to cheer on your team and do other things, because sometimes the stress or the routine of the work is tiring.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“For us (the motivation is) to relax, also, so my child learns swimming ... I like to swim and my baby likes water so we relax, exercise.” (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*“The only program I used in the Park District, in terms of workshops, was yoga classes. That was for me, for my time, to try to be more relaxed, to be less stressed.” (Constanza, LAT, Chile, U)*

#### **h. Child-care function of the programs**

A number of African American and Asian mothers also admitted that the UPD programs functioned as a day care for their children.

*“I work Monday through Friday, I need her to be somewhere. So it’s usually for childcare and as well as the activity.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*“Daycare, basically, because you got to work. Because we have a single child so we don’t have an older kid to be able to take care of them.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

*“We use the program as daycare every single day because we don’t have family here. So, we need somebody to watch her all the time.” (Nan, AS, Thailand U).*

#### **i. Developing children's interests**

A number of parents indicated that they signed their children up for the UPD programs so they could pursue their passion for swimming and arts.

*"She enjoys art and crafts. I found her an art camp because of that, because she likes crafts and art, it's something she loves to do." (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*"For me, it's just for developing their interests." (female, AS, U)*

#### **j. Safety**

One person – a Latina mother - also indicated that she insisted that her children learn to swim at the Park District for safety reasons.

*"For example swimming, sometimes people say, 'Oh, it is so much a month!' but it is very beneficial because my children know how to swim well and if they get into a pool I know they're safe because they can swim. If I did not pay and they didn't go, then they wouldn't learn." (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

### **4. What are the needs, interests, and constraints related to the utilization of parks and park facilities among the underserved populations?**

UPD users and park visitors have been asked which UPD parks they and their family/children like best and why, are there things that prevent them from visiting the UPD parks and park facilities more often, and what would be their suggestions for improving UPD parks and park facilities. First, we will discuss which parks the interviewed users visited the most and what activities they engaged in while in the parks. Second, we will discuss the visitors' evaluation of parks and park facilities. Third, we will examine their constraints on park visitation. And fourth, we will present their suggestions for improvement of UPD parks and park facilities.

#### **• Parks visited and activities engaged in parks**

Many of the study participants indicated that they visited most of the Urbana Parks, "enjoyed them all" (Oscar, AA, U), "liked them...had good time... and always felt welcomed in parks" (Constanza, LAT, Chile, U). The most popular parks among the study participants were Meadowbrook Park and Crystal Lake Park. Study participants also visited Victory Park, Blair Park, Madera Park and Larson Park.

- **Meadowbrook Park** was primarily used for visits with kids, walking, jogging, and riding a bike, and was highly appreciated for its wooden play structures, native prairie vegetation, and wildlife viewing. People also attended music festivals and walked their dogs in the park.

*“I live very close to Meadowbrook Park, so I use Meadowbrook Park very, very frequently. That park is really nice. I really like it. I think I will rank it number one park in the Champaign-Urbana area, because I walk many of their trails.” [What do you like about this park?] “I like the trail and I like how they renovated the wooden structures. What else? Deers!” (Helen, AS, China, U)*

*[Asked about their favorite park] “Mine is Meadowbrook because there are more structure that they (children) would like to climb” (AA, female, U)*

*“We go to Meadowbrook Park quite a bit. We go to that park more than any park in Urbana. [Interviewer: Why do you go to that one?] It’s the largest. We use the trail, from the swings to the play area and stuff.” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*“We’ve been going to that park (Meadowbrook Park) so many times when we lived there. We call it the Wooden Park because it has that big wood structure; we walked ... the prairie grasses. We used to exercise there. It’s just completely different.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*I walk in Meadowbrook with my dogs, do the circuit. And we also -- throughout the years, based on the age range for my child, we’ve attended different things...like the strawberry jam in Meadowbrook.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

- **Crystal Lake Park and Crystal Lake Pavilion** – were primarily used for walking and enjoying nature, fishing in the lagoon, family reunions, family events (birthdays, dances), and work-related events.

*“[We visit] all the parks, but Crystal Lake Park is our favorite so we’ve been there a lot of times, fish there, stuff like that.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*“Sometimes this year, she (his sister) invited me to come with her and my older brother to this dance thing. I showed up and the place looked nice. Where we were at, it was a little building and it looked like it had a little patio place, right off the water. We were doing like this dance thing there. I’m like, ‘Oh, this place is pretty neat... I never saw it before at the park.’” (Angel, LAT, Puerto Rico, N-U)*

*[Interviewee talks about renting the pavilion at Crystal Lake Park for his church group and work activities] “We’ve also had Crystal Lake for church.*

*We've done picnics at the pavilion. We use it in different ways; it's very cheap to rent for an event and the staff there has been pretty accommodating unless you're working for the university, because the university has paperwork that the city won't take.*” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)

- **Blair Park, Victory Park, Larson Park, West South Park, and Madera Park** – were primarily used for children's activities (playgrounds) and sports such as tennis, t-ball, and soccer.

*[We got to] “Blair Park, my son had played T-ball.”* (Daphne, AA, U)

*“I would say, Blair Park and quite a few other parks in the community. We play soccer so we go to the different parks for that.”* (Marcus, AA, U)

*“I use the Victory Park near Lincoln Square. The park is very near my house so my older son, two years and a half, he uses the children's playground. It improved his physical strength. When he first came to the park, he could not play any part of this but later on, he could play with the facility very well. The park has the tennis court and basketball field.”* (Huang, AS, China, U)

*[Asked if she visits parks] “Yes, of course. We visit those that are closer to us. The one at Madera. Because it is easier for us; we spend less on gasoline.”* (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)

*“We were renting a house in front of Victory Park on purpose because the park was right up front. Within a week that we moved there, there was ...I think it was a neighborhood association kind of gallery. We went and then, afterwards, on Tuesday, somebody comes and plays a banjo and other stuff in there, so it was fun. That happened right in front of our window. [The interviewee ended up purchasing a house on the other side of Victory Park to be able to live in its proximity].”* (Carlos, LAT, Mexican, U)

- **Evaluation of parks and park facilities**

Urbana parks were generally considered clean although a few interviewees commented that water in the Crystal Lake Park “looked a little bit dirty.” The interviewees agreed that park amenities in the UPD parks were “in generally good shape.” Parks were seen as generally safe, although a few visitors expressed concern about crime and homeless people, especially in the evening hours, and complained about the lack of lighting and the parks being “empty” (no personnel, patrols, or police presence). Signs in Meadowbrook Park were used as an example of positive park amenities. A number of interviewees compared Meadowbrook in positive terms to other parks that had no signage and where bathrooms were “difficult to find.”

*“We go to the West South Park. It’s always clean. It’s never dirty out there and there are no arguments, no fighting and all of that. We always go there, ever year, and I had never had a problem.” (female, AA, U)*

*[What is your opinion of Urbana parks?] “The truth is that the water looks a little dirty ... You don’t see garbage and the facilities are clean. [Do you feel safe in the parks?] So far I feel they are safe. I have not had any problems.” (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)*

*“The one at Crystal Lake I’ve sometimes seen a little dirty. Maybe it’s because the boys sometimes ... we don’t take care of it. Trash and other things are thrown, but relatively minimal.” (Veronica, LAT, Peru, N-U)*

*[Are you happy with the upkeep of parks?] “I mean sometimes they’re a week late or something on some of the stuff that they do, but at Victory, every Monday they go clean it up. So, whatever happened on the weekend, it’s been picked up by Monday afternoon usually.” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

*“The amenities, they’re really in good shape.” (Nelson, AA, U)*

*[Do you feel safe at Urbana parks?] “Yeah, I do. Urbana parks are good... At Champaign, you cannot be in Douglas Park.” (Roger, AA, U)*

*“I think they (Urbana parks) are different. I think Meadowbrook is very nice, but the parks that are near Washington are not so pretty. There is a difference ... I can’t explain it. Is there more budget for that park (Meadowbrook)? I wouldn’t go to any of the parks that are near Wal-Mart. [Interviewer: Why not?] Because it’s dark and it gives you the feeling that it is more dangerous. I think it’s the lights, a little because of the area, and also the signs. Meadowbrook is very well marked, where you enter and where you leave ... On the other hand, the other parks don’t indicate where the entrance is” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*[Which parks do you go to?] “To the Madera one, the one that is behind El Progreso (Mexican store).” (Diana, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “That park seems very dangerous to me. Actually, there aren’t even any signs of where you can park, right? You enter and you park wherever you want.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “Then bathrooms are also hidden.” (Diana, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “Yes, and the bathrooms are hidden.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“There are never any people there (staff, workers)! I go to Meadowbrook often and I wouldn’t be able to tell you who work for the park.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U) “No, no one (is there to give information)! And if the doors are closed there is no one to tell to open the bathroom doors. There is no one!” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*



- **Constraints on park visitation**

Constraints on park visitation and enjoyment could be classified into three categories: those related to parks themselves (e.g., cost of renting facilities, lack of bathrooms, fear of crime in the park, and problems with finding a park); personal circumstances of the interviewees (too tired, too busy, lack of time and energy, lack of cars), and of the general nature (cold Illinois weather, problems with transportation – finding a parking spot, parks surrounded by busy streets).

*“People go to the park because it’s free” (Jill, AA, N-U) “But you have a bus fare to pay if you want to get to (a park)” (Samantha, AA, N-U)*

*“We wanted to rent the boathouse for one of my nieces sweet 16, but it’s a little expensive because I think it was charged by the hour. I just think it should be a flat rate.” (Sheryl, AA, U)*

*“We go to Carle Park every summer” (Thom, AA, U) “Yeah, but they don’t have a bathroom. So you got to get away to the bathroom and we already walk down there.” (Sheryl, AA, U)*

*[Interviewer: Have you ever felt afraid of crime in Urbana parks?] “The truth is that I have felt afraid based on the things I have heard about Crystal Park. I’ve gone with a certain fear, but I’ve never seen anything happen. It is more based on the things that I have heard. [Interviewer: What have you heard about the Crystal Lake Park?] One time I heard that they found a dead man... I heard that there was a fight and they killed a man.” (Francisca, LAT, Chile, U)*

*“The park that I was trying to look for... the reason I was going there was because I do archery. They said they have archery there and I just couldn’t find it. I got lost somewhere in these little mobile home places back there.” (Angel, LAT, Puerto Rico, N-U)*

*“I also go to Meadowbrook, but only once a year.” [Interviewer: Why don’t you go more often?] Because I get home very tired from work” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*[Interviewee visited only one park close to Orchard Downs. Asked why he doesn’t she visit other parks.] “Because they’re far from the house and the weather is cold so I like to stay warm so I prefer to stay inside.” (Mahnoor, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“Because I’m afraid of the high speed so I don’t drive. I have no car so we often went to other parks in friends’ car.” (Poppi, AS, China, U)*

*“There are nice parks but we would like to ride bicycles more safely.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)*

- **Suggestions for improvement**

When asked for recommendations on what can be done to improve Urbana parks, both users and non-users mentioned making parks more visually appealing (“adding more color” by planting flowers), keeping parks open longer in the summer, installing maps at park entrances, improving lighting, increasing security, providing more infrastructure for older children, and installing bathrooms in parks that lack this amenity. When asked which park in Urbana they thought was the most beautiful participants in focus groups with Latinos and Asians mentioned the Japan House and the nearby Idea Garden. They were surprised to find out that these parks belonged not to the UPD but to the University of Illinois. Focus group participants cited beautiful flower gardens and park architecture as the most attractive features of these two parks.

*“They [parks] are pretty, but they need more color ... Something different because they look very dull.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“I think, visually speaking, the parks are lacking. So for me, that’s one of the key components of going to a park, going to a place where it’s beautiful and attractive. The inside could be okay, but the entrance itself could be visually more attractive rather than just a sign.” (Alice, AS, China, N-U)*

*[Interviewer: Which park is the most beautiful?] “The Meadowbrook.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U) “The Chinese park where there are a lot of flowers.” (Diana, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “That one is very pretty!” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U). “That park is gorgeous!” (Itzel, LAT, Mexico, N-U).*

*[Interviewer: Which park is most appealing to you?] “The Japan House. Many people go to the Japan House because it looks appealing to them or (they go) to the gardens close to the Japan House.” (Zainab, AS, Iraq, N-U) [Interviewer: More flowers?] “Yeah” (Zainab, AS, Iraq, N-U) “Flowers, landscaping, a bigger sign like an archway.” (Alice, AS, China, N-U) “Maybe like a visitor’s information plaque that has the actual map of how the park looks like. When you go to a place that you want to visit, you have the outside “Welcome Visitors” (sign) and you have a little information map of the park.” (Jane, AS, China, N-U)*

*[Interviewer: Do you visit Urbana Parks?] “Yes. I like to go with my baby. He likes to walk, take strolls, and play. [Interviewer: What are the things that you would like to see improved in Urbana parks?] During the summer, they have activities, but maybe they could have them open till later hours? Here I feel that sometimes there is nothing to do other than go shopping. Maybe that’s what they could do, because all of the parks say that they close at 8pm. They should use the time to do more activities during the summer.” (Francisca, LAT, Chile, U)*

*“I think there should be more police or security guards; more lights lighting the pathways, because it’s very dark. [Interviewer: Have you ever felt afraid of the*

*crime or violence in these areas?]* Yes, in Crystal Lake Park. *[Interviewer: Why?]* Because it is kind of solitary and there isn't much illumination. Anything can happen there." (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)

*[Interviewer: What are the things that you would like to see improved in Urbana parks?]* For example the Carle Park needs infrastructures for bigger children. Almost in all parks everything is for small children. There is nothing for children between 10 to 13 years old... Like climbing walls or pathways for bicycles or something like that." (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)

*[Asked what can be improved about the parks]* "The Meadowbrook Park has a bathroom, but not all parks have a bathroom. I imagine it has to do with the dimension of facility. The lighting because now that it gets darker earlier." (Constanza, LAT, Chile, U)

## **5. What can Urbana Park District do to better meet their needs?**

Focus group and interview participants have been asked what the Urbana Park District could do to better serve their needs. The interviewees provided a number of suggestions for improvement. Most of them were geared toward helping all disfranchised residents have a better access to the UPD programs (being creative about pricing of programs, providing diversity training to coaches), while others were group-specific (e.g., lowering language barrier), or targeted towards residents of the most disfranchised communities (Lierman). The suggestions included: lower prices, offer discounted activities, and advertise the scholarships better; make applying for scholarships easier; lower the language and cultural barrier; consider modifying the hours when the programs are offered and the facilities are opened; be clear about the goals of the programs, improve training of the summer staff; provide food stands at facilities; provide information and diversity training to coaches; improve hygiene / do not allow food into pool areas; provide more opportunities for interaction among parents; and develop an outreach program to the most disfranchised communities.

### **a. Lower prices, offer discounted activities, and advertise the scholarships better**

Cost was the most often mentioned constraint by the interviewed African Americans and Latinos. When asked to provide recommendations for the Park District on how this constraint could be mitigated, the interviewees talked about reducing prices or offering free admission during certain limited hours, allowing users to bring a friend, developing an alternative to charging the \$3 fee for parents of children using the pool (e.g., a wrist band), advertising the scholarships better, allowing parents to apply for more than two scholarships per family, applying for external grants to support programs for the most vulnerable members of the community, and reconsidering the definition of "Urbana

residence” when determining prices (residents of some communities such as Ivanhoe are required to pay higher prices and are not eligible for scholarships).

*“Lower the cost. That’s the thing. It doesn’t have to be free but just make it affordable.” (AA female, N-U) “It’s the first time I heard about scholarship. And I have more than one child, so how would I split that up in the family?” (female, AA, N-U)*

*“That would be nice to be able to bring in guests, because you could bring some of their friends that may not have money. Or reduce the price, or have some hours where maybe they can let them in for a dollar, you know? Or a couple of hours (for) free. ...Not every weekend (but on) certain days or something.” (female, AA, U)*

*“Something that we used to do at the YMCA, they have what is called the “strong kid” - it’s a family campaign that we will market the fact that we have these scholarships available for people. It was a limpy process but you would get it. But yeah, I think the part where if you guys just market more and just make sure when you’re putting this information, make sure the information gets out. Maybe you want a separate flyer about how people could sign up for scholarships, streamline the process to where it’s easier for them to do it? But more importantly, market that process and you guys will be extremely successful, you’ll get so many more people than you know how to deal with.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

#### **b. Make applying for scholarships easier**

Latino focus group participants commented that the paperwork required for scholarship application prevented many undocumented immigrants from applying for scholarships. They recommended that the Park District allows for alternative “proofs of low income” such as WIC or EBT cards.

*“There are many people who do not have proof of income because they get payed in cash at their job... they (UPD) always ask you for check stubs here. There is no way you can apply for this thing (referring to scholarships).” (Gabriela, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “There should be an easier way to apply; without so many questions.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U) “For example, like WIC...” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U) [Interviewer: If you receive EBT, WIC, or other things it should be enough of a proof that a person is low-income?] “Exactly!” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

#### **c. Lower the language and cultural barrier**

The need to lower the language and cultural barrier surfaced in all focus groups and interviews with Latino users and non-users. First, the interviewees mentioned the need to have a Spanish-speaking member of the staff to help answer questions, translate print

materials, or take phone calls from people who have problems communicating in English. Second, the participants also cautioned the UPD about using terms in their print materials that may be difficult to understand by people of other cultural backgrounds (e.g., Pee Wee to describe the level/age of participants), or “residence” (with reference to residence in Urbana). Third, some of the Latino interviewees commented that it would be desirable if the UPD activity instructors could communicate at least basic instructions in Spanish. Fourth, some Spanish-language signage in the main recreation areas (e.g., indoor pool) would be helpful.

*“I’m interested (in participating) but the bad thing is that sometimes I do not understand much (from the activity guide). It would be nice if they made books in Spanish because people sometimes say ‘What does it say here?’” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“A lot of people tell me, ‘but they do not speak Spanish.’ If they had an interpreter on the phone, people would sign their children up.” (Andrea, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“I speak a little English so I try to ask, but there are people who are afraid (to ask for information at the UPD facilities). Also to be able to streamline more tools for Latino people like providing catalogs in Spanish, having someone in the office who speaks Spanish ... because there are many Latinos here.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)*

*“I think what they said about the interpreter is great. That way those that do not understand English can apply.” (Itzel, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“I have read these flyers and the translation is very bad. They should not only translate Spanish, but be capable to do so.” (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*“Like in the pool facility, for example, there is no information in Spanish or anything, so one sometimes feels lost there.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)*

*[Talking about problems with the activity guide] “For example, I struggled at first to understand why some classes were ... soccer for example, because they said ‘Pee Wee.’ What’s ‘Pee Wee?’ It means nothing to me. They are very local terms. I asked a white person and he told me it was for younger children.” (Andres, LAT, Mexico, N-U)*

*“For example, yesterday I had to ask what Nads I and Nads II meant in the catalog on page 33. They had to explain to me, because it’s in English and because I don’t understand the vocabulary they use there. It is not very clear and it becomes more difficult to understand when it’s in English.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)*

**d. Consider modifying the hours when the programs are offered and the facilities are opened**

The comments received from the users pertained to the duration of the summer programs that some parents believed should last longer, extending pick up hours by 30 minutes to help accommodate schedules of shift working parents, and keeping the outdoor pools open until dusk.

*“I think their hours are pretty good but if they had like the summer camp maybe a little bit longer to coincide with daycares, then it would be easier. Right now, it ends a little earlier -- like two or three weeks before the school year starts. But also, the drop off is like 7:30 and pick up is at 3:00 or 5:30. But then the 7:30 and the 5:30, that’s really not as long as most of the daycares are. So, if they did it just maybe half an hour longer, it would probably be easier for people who are working especially if they’re shift workers or they have to be there a certain time and get out at a certain time.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

*“If I were to complain about Urbana pools, is the hours. When it’s summer, it gets dark at 9:30 or 10:00, but the pools have been close for two to three hours. And if they were renting it and there were probably parties, maybe it’d be nice [to keep them open longer]. It’s still very hot. It’s still light.” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

**e. Be clear about the program goals**

Many of the interviewed Asian parents expressed concern that the programs offered by the UPD did not meet their expectations in terms of the level of instruction and competitiveness. However, they also observed that knowing that the goal of the programs was exposing children to activities and having fun, rather than fast improvement of skills and reaching competitive level, would allowed them to have realistic expectations and prevented disappointment.

*“Knowing what to expect is really helpful to me. Like swimming, actually whatever lesson. We were so disappointed to the point that we did not want to pursue. Had I known that this is to expose my kid to swimming, to dancing, activity, we would feel nothing but thankful.” (Nan, AS, Thailand, U)*

*“My suggestion is to those entry-level coaches, they need to explain what’s the goal, what’s the expectation in order to avoid disappointing the parents. Otherwise, they think that this is a competitive team but obviously it’s not.” (Jessica, AS, China, U)*

*“And I think it’s a win-win to have information especially like first-time parents, we did not know much. We did soccer and we didn’t know anything. But looking back, we wish we knew so we could enjoy our time.” (Hellen, AS, China, U)*

*“We have a much more diverse population in Champaign-Urbana and people are coming from different countries and they may think, ‘Well, if I pay a fee, I get more; this is a competitive team, (and) as long as my kid puts in the time, they’re going to excel and be able to be part of maybe a league team.’ So maybe laying that out somehow; having a parent meeting too and to explain that and the expectations and the goals, that would probably help.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

#### **f. Improve training of the summer staff**

All Asian users commented positively about the friendliness, politeness, and helpfulness of the UPD staff. However, some complained about the training of the summer staff. Several Asian and Latino interviewees commented that the seasonal staff at the outdoor aquatic center were not always pleasant, gave them the wrong information, and could not communicate in Spanish.

*“It’s like more training for staff in the summer.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

*“The challenge would be summertime at the swimming pool because they’re not very knowledgeable. I was told the wrong thing many times like, ‘Oh, I don’t know how to use this machine to take your picture so you have to come back.’ ‘When would we come back?’ ‘You will come back at this time...’ I put it on my phone. I took time off from work just to be there during that time... I tried approximately three times, four times, and then I decided to go to the main office. So I wish they don’t tell people wrong information, you know? Because people like me, I work in an office. I have to ask for time off and organize with my family. I was so mad!” (Helen, AS, China, U)*

*“The kids they have at the pool sometimes are a little bit like that (unnecessarily correcting behavior of visitors). If I was in charge of them, I would not only rotate them every 10 minutes, but I would give them something useful and engaging to do because they’re bored and they’re looking for something to do, a lot of whistling and stuff.” (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)*

#### **g. Provide food stands at facilities**

An issue that surfaced during the focus group with African American users was lack of places where food could be purchased in or in the vicinity of UPD facilities (e.g., Brookens Gym). Some parents commented that a stand with hot food opened on weekends would be a welcome addition to the facility.

*“You would be here [in Brookens] all the day on a Saturday for basketball game and stuff because when you have multiple kids, you’d be here all day from the little kids, all the way up to the high school boys playing ball. They don’t have a place where you could buy stuff. You know, like hotdogs and hot food and stuff. My kids always*

*take their own food to the pool. But here (Brookens), I'm here all day on a Saturday and they don't have any place to eat. I have to leave and go home and come back."* (Sheryl, AA, U)

#### **h. Improve hygiene / Do not allow food into pool areas**

The issue of food also surfaced in the focus group with Asian users with reference to hygiene at the outdoor aquatic center. The participants suggested that the staff should strictly enforce the rule prohibiting bringing food to the facility.

*"The swimming pool...we appreciate the outdoor one exclusively. The staff is very, very friendly and nice, and the facility is outstanding on the plus side. On the downside, the staff is so nice that they're so lenient and they allow food and it's really, really unpleasant when all of the trash gets into the swimming pool. So I would like to see that the park uphold their rules. Everybody is here to enjoy. The safety would come first...so the kids don't get like any toxic stuff or any bacteria in their eyes."* (Nan, AS, Thailand, U)

*"In the past summer, I only went to the outdoor swimming pool once. I was shocked, the hygiene is not that good. I kind of hesitated to get into the water because I've been to so many other outdoor pools here but this one is -- they need to pay attention to hygiene."* (Jessica, AS, China, U)

#### **i. Provide information and diversity training to coaches**

One of the UPD coaches interviewed in the study brought up an issue of insensitive comments made by some of the UPD coaches who might have been considered acts of "microaggression" by the minority visitors. He recommended that the UPD includes a component of multicultural training in the coaching clinics where coaches could learn how to better understand and interact with their diverse clients.

*"I will always advocate for quality of coaching clinics. Things like that are important, especially if they could add a component of multicultural training. It doesn't have to be a full day seminar or anything like that but just so folks recognize who they're reaching out to, the sensitivities of that community or the people that are going to be interacting with services. I think that's important."* (Marcus, AA, U)

#### **j. Provide more opportunities for interactions among parents**

Most of the African American, Asian, and Latino users commented that they appreciated an opportunity to interact with other parents. One interviewee provided a concrete suggestion on what the Park District can do to foster such information interactions.



*“I used to be a classroom teacher in a couple of districts and one of the things that we would do for our parents is we would have a morning coffee, or something to incentivize them to stick around for just a little bit. We know a lot of parents, they might be working two jobs and they really can only drop off their children and have somebody else in their family pick up or whatever, but I think if the Park District were to be intentional about providing even if it’s like a little coffee station or a signage that says, ‘Have a cup of coffee...’ ‘Have a great day.’ Something like that would prompt people to get out of their comfort zone. I think that would be the first step in getting parents to engage. I think that if there were more about like a community, I think parents would appreciate it and they would then perhaps be inspired or motivated to take it upon themselves to then interact with other parents.”*  
(Laura, LAT, Mexico, U)

#### **k. Develop an outreach program to the most disfranchised communities**

African American interviewees and focus group participants suggested that additional steps, beyond of what the Park District is already doing, would be needed to reach out to the residents of the most disfranchised communities such as Lierman. They recommended that a special outreach program is developed by the UPD in which the first step would involve organizing activities for children and youth in the community itself. This would allow for developing trust with the community and for introducing programs offered by the UPD. Subsequently, community leaders would need to work with the UPD staff to bring local youth to the recreation centers and involve them in the activities offered by the UPD. A “safe walk,” potentially modeled on the Chicago’s Safe Passage Program which is designed to provide safe routes for students while traveling to and from school, could be developed to escort the children from the community to the local recreation center. <http://cps.edu/Pages/safepassage.aspx>

- **Organizing activities in the communities**

*“We just needed something for the kids to do. You would need to setup something after the school activity, just an evening activity or a weekend activity for these kids. [Interviewer: What kind of activities?] Well, the older kids, they like to play sports. Basketball, football; I keep at home some flags so they could play flag football because that would be good for them, because I see them they’ll be trying to play football tougher. [Interviewer: What about the younger kids?] The younger kids need a lot of activities. They love to setup the table and just color and draw and just play.”* (Jerry, AA, N-U)

*[Interviewer: Where would be a good place to organize such activities?] “Right here in the middle, right in front of my house. They’ll be right there to play football, they go right there to play basketball.”* (female, AA, N-U)

- **Develop a mentorship program and involve community leaders and parents**

*[It would be important to] “Having the mentors to come by, you know, be trustworthy to take your kids.” (Jerry, AA, N-U)*

*“I like working with kids, but you got to have trust when you’re doing stuff like that. I noticed that when I was working at my brother’s basketball camp in Minneapolis, those moms, and parents trusted him. We got to have that trust factor. If they know you a little bit, they know what you have accomplished, they probably have a lot of trust in you. There’s a lot of people who need to come together and get that done. ... But if they want to come in, several of your group wants to come in, there’s going to be a good example. If you come in and you will see the kids, that’d be a good time for you, and if you have a little crew with you to go and talk with them...” (Jerry, AA, N-U)*

- **Offer a safety walk for children from the Lierman community to the recreation center**

*“They had something like that (“a safe walk”). They would come to get your kids to school, and walk with them to school and walk with them home. But they only get them like three days a week but that was still...that was nice for them to have something like that. They need something like that.” (AA female, N-U)*

*[Asked whom she would trust her kids with] “The police, because I won’t have an issue while walking my own kids here, you know walk them home, but I’m scared. And the duty of a parent is to protect your kids, so the police is supposed to protect the world, so we would feel comfortable if they got a police escort. So yes, the kids would like to be walked back and forth by the police.” (AA female, N-U)*

*[Interviewer: What about people like yourself and maybe a couple of older people who lived in this community who have trust, would you be comfortable bringing them into the center if there were some activities offered for them?] “Yeah. Yes, we would.” (Jerry, AA, N-U)*

## **6. How people find out about the Urbana Park District and how the communication can be improved?**

### **How the users obtained the information**

Participants have been asked how they had obtained information about the UPD programs and events. They mentioned that their main sources of information included the program guide received through the mail, word of mouth, flyers brought by children from

school, UPD website and facebook posts, e-mail, seeing other people participating in activities, visits to the UPD facilities, and directly calling the Park District.

**a. Program guide received through mail**

Program guide was the main source of information for the participants. Some of the Asian interviewees, however, expressed confusion regarding which residents of Orchard Downs were receiving it. Some believed that only families with children were sent the guide, others stated that they received it regularly, while a few focus group participants mentioned that it was not distributed to families in their housing units. None of the interviewed residents of Lierman has ever seen the guide before it was shown to them during the focus group.

*“I go through that book that is mailed to me and I look at events that are going on and I put it in my phone.” (Trisha, AA, U)*

*“I usually get the Park District booklet. They’ll mail like a book, and so I get it through the mail. And I’ll look at the book and find out what they have going on as far as activities.” (Lawanda, AA, U)*

*[Asked if she receives the program guide] “Yes. I receive them every time there is a new one.” (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)*

*“I got it just because I’m a resident of Family & Graduate Housing, but not all get that one. I believe -- who has children, they get that one. Actually, that pamphlet works really well because so many friends of mine from Indonesia who are staying with their families, they send their kids through that pamphlet because there are so many information about the activities. It’s not just like one piece of pamphlet, but it’s like a magazine, which is like you have a choice of swimming, you have a choice of dancing, volleyball, cross-country, so many activities that it was already been there. Many families, they love that magazine actually.” (Putri, AS, Indonesia, N-U)*

*“The paper one...I just go through it and I fill it out when it gets to our house. On the day that we can actually get them (children) in -- like with the summer camp, it gets filled up really fast. So the day I get it, I fill it out and then the day I can actually get it into the register person, I walk it in like the minute I can and then we can get all our slots.” (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

**b. Word of mouth**

Many participants indicated that “word of mouth” was how they initially found out about the Park District, its parks and activities. It prompted them to look for more

information on the UPD website and to pay attention to the program guides they received in the mail.

*[Interviewer: How did you hear about these programs?] “Actually, from friends.” (Huang, AS, China, U)*

*“The thing about Urbana Park District is that we hear a lot of things from people who actually have done the program. They’re giving us information, that’s how we find out.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*“Online and some through word of mouth. We had a workout class, the Transformers through DJ Martin, who’s a personal trainer in the community. And so, we found out from him, through word of mouth.” (Marcus, AA, U)*

*“In our first year, we have been introduced by our friends. Then, we looked into the programs in the book. So then I know the book, then I know the website and so on.” (Intan, AS, Indonesia, U)*

*“We found out about the parks because we toured the city to get to know it a little bit more. Also, because other people recommended some parks, because we attended activities that the Park District organizes outdoor, like concerts ... also because we receive magazines every semester. We also searched the Park District website.” (Constanza, LAT, Chile, U)*

### **c. Flyers**

A number of parents indicated they found out about the UPD programs from the flyers their children brought from school. While some participants mentioned they paid close attention to the information children brought home in their folders, others admitted that they did not review it carefully. None of the interviewees from Lierman indicated they had received flyers from their children’s school.

*“(Employee 10), he would bring the flyers around for the school.” (Trisha, AA, U)*

*“From the flyer my daughter brought in from school.” (Yang, AS, China, U)*

*“I’ve been doing it for so long. I raised my nieces and then now my own kids. So I just know when it’s time of the season but they send papers home. They put them in a folder; that’s how I get it. Like the basketball... it comes in the end of the week folder.” (Sheryl, AA, U)*

*[Asked how he obtains information about the UPD programs] “Mostly school. The school flyers are very good. There are parents that open up the folder and parents that don’t open the folder. So, in my family, we open the folder, not every*

*day but we're trained to check. He's trained to pull them out and put them on the table. I'm trained to open up, but my wife will make sure that once in a while she checks deep in the bag to see if anything else is there. Again, my wife will call me and make sure we will know by, at the latest, by the beginning of April where the summer is going to go. We're unusual. I mean, we're usually the people that are talking through with others as to, 'What are you doing? Oh, you haven't done anything?' 'Oh, no, we haven't. Is it already time?' 'Yes, it is.'"* (Carlos, LAT, Mexico, U)

*[Asked if she receives flyers from her children's school] "Yes, but I don't usually pay much attention to them."* (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)

#### **d. Website / Facebook**

Several interviewees commented that they had found additional information about the UPD programs through the website. Facebook was a good reminder about the activities that were going on in the UPD. It was used primarily by the Asian interviewees.

*"We searched the Park District website."* (Constanza, LAT, Chile, U)

*"I used to look at this (activity guide) quite a bit but then, when I learned that I can find the same information online, I kind of go when I need. However, Facebook is helpful because sometimes I don't think about it. I don't think about, 'Oh I should go to the outdoor pool.' So the last time was the first time we went and then I regretted I didn't do it before. So Facebook to me."* (Nan, AS, Thailand, U)

*[Asked how he obtains information about the UPD programs] "Facebook!"* (Yang, AS, China, U)

#### **e. E-mail**

Two African American female participants commented that e-mail reminders sent by the Park District prompted them to register for activities.

*"I get emails. Yeah, I get emails but you got to sign up for emails. So I'm on the email because like my receipts, they send them straight through my email like I don't even get a paper."* (Sheryl, AA, U)

*"E-mails about early bird registration... like if you sign up by this day, they will have these paper to send out and they might send out a book too."* (Trisha, AA, U)

**f. Seeing other people participating**

Several interviewees recalled that seeing parks from a passing car, festivals in the park, or others participating in activities such as dance or yoga, made them explore opportunities offered by the Park District.

*“When I was new, I started my grad school in 2009. So I used to live on West Main Street; there was one office there and whenever I come back from school, I line up from the bus, I see people having some dance or something. Just one day out of curiosity, I just entered the building and that was the first time I come to know that it’s a Park District and they have certain other activities as well, like yoga or something.... Whenever there is some chance, I think there is one festival very close to the Orchard Downs, like the strawberries or something, so at that occasion, they do advertise a lot and we go there and a lot of people from Orchard Downs go there as well.” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

**g. Visit to the Phillips Recreation Center**

Several of the Latino interviewees indicated that they would visit the Phillips Recreation Center directly to obtain information about the programs. One of them was concerned about not being able to communicate in English over the phone while the other was not receiving the catalog in the mail.

*“I went to ask the Park District.” (Elisa, LAT, El Salvador, U)*

*“I went to the Park District and asked about the catalog. [Interviewer: Do you get the catalogue at home in Orchard Downs?] “I don’t get anything. I just go to the office and pick up the catalog.” (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)*

**h. Phone**

One of the Asian participants revealed that she relied mainly on the program guide, but when in need of additional information, she would call the UPD directly.

*“This program (guide) is very, very useful no matter if you’re older residents or you’re the newcomers; it’s good enough. And then also, a lot of times, if I don’t have that, I call them. Yeah, I call them and say, ‘Hey, what’s the business hours - open swimming?’ this kind of thing.” (Jessica, AS, China, U)*

**Suggestions for improvement in marketing / communications**

Both UPD users and non-users have been asked how the UPD can improve its promotional materials and how best to reach the widest segments of African American, Asian, and Latino

residents of Urbana. The participants' recommendations included: redesigning the activity guide, distributing flyers in the community (suggestion from the residents of Lierman), developing collaborations with Parkland and UIUC (distributing information through the housing office, International Student and Scholar Service, and individual departments, and organizing trips for the incoming international students and visitors to introduce them to facilities and parks), and sending e-mail reminders to the existing users to register for UPD programs.

#### **a. Redesign the activity guide**

The immigrant interviewees from Asia and Latin American struggled with understanding the guide the most. Problems with interpreting the guide were aggravated by their lack of English language fluency and culture-specific terms used in the catalog. The specific suggestions for redesigning the activity guide included having a table up front that would list activities by the target age, having a table where activities could be listed by the type of sport, and avoiding using culture-specific jargon (e.g., Pee Wee).

*"At first, because our language is not English, if we have to grasp all the information offered page by page, sometimes we miss some programs. So if there is a table in front we can go to find the good programs it would help. So I think, if possible, could the staff give a statistic for all the items or programs? So later, if the parents know, 'Okay, we can schedule the programs according to children's ages such as 'My son is 10 years old, so I can say, 'How many programs (fit this age category)?'" (Poppi, AS, China, U)*

*Have a summary of this (talking about the catalog) because it is very long to read ... For example, have it say that football and basketball are on such and such page." (Andres, LAT, Chile, N-U)*

*"If you were to maybe make the program guide more accessible, you can maybe put a tagline on the first page in maybe the top five languages saying, 'This is Urbana Program guide. It offers leisure activities, after-school care or day camp,' in each of the languages, the top five, and then maybe people would understand 'We're part of this, this is a program we could do' (and they could ask their friends to help to translate)." (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

*[Is the catalog easy to understand?] "Well no, actually, I went yesterday and asked them to place my son on the next swimming level. So the truth is that I didn't understand the catalog, firstly because what's in each class and what the children do isn't well defined. What each group does, like the youth group, isn't clear or it doesn't say. I do not understand it very well and it becomes more difficult to understand when it's in English." (Luisa, LAT, Colombia, U)*

*"Actually, the swimming classes for babies are a bit confusing. The schedules come first and sometimes they don't line up with the classes or the prices of the*

*classes are not ... I don't know. It is a mess! [Interviewer: How would you like for it to be organized?] Well, the class, the age, the schedule, the requirements and the prices of the class in a single section.” (Karla, LAT, Mexico, U)*

#### **b. Distribute flyers in the community**

Many of the African American residents of the Lierman community who participated in the focus group indicated that they had not received the activity guide and had not been paying particular attention to the flyers distributed in schools. They suggested that the best way to reach out to the community residents would be to distribute flyers door-to-door and talk to the residents directly.

*“Stick flyers in the doors in the community.” (AA female, N-U)*

*“You could pass them out and put them on the doors like paper bill, you know? Screen doors if they got them. If they don't get them, knock on their doors and pass them by and have a couple of minutes and talk to them about it.” (Debbie, AA, N-U)*

#### **c. Develop collaborations with Parkland and UIUC**

A common recommendation made by the participants affiliated with Parkland and the University of Illinois was for the UPD to develop collaborations with local colleges and to distribute information through individual departments, housing office, and the office of International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). Moreover, international students and scholars recommended that in order to reach out to the UIUC student and faculty, departments and registered student organizations (RSOs) should be encouraged to host their events in the UPD facilities. The UPD should also organize short trips for the incoming international students and visiting scholars to introduce them to the UPD parks and facilities.

*“Just develop partnership with the U of I, partnership with the city, and you guys could create something special. So just keep working on that angle and just embrace the community, the colleges. This partnership just needs to open up and embrace community and amazing things will happen.” (Oscar, AA, U)*

*“I think there's a lot of visiting scholars, like me, living here and studying here for only one year, so there is no time for us to understand all of this information, especially about the UPD. Maybe, because when we arrive, we must register in the housing office. Can you collaborate with the housing office? We must register our name and all the information in the office. So I think it is a good chance and another way to collaborate with the housing office to share this information to all of us.” (Wang, AS, China, N-U)*



*“Everyone chooses the MTD bus, going to the campus and coming back. Sometimes, I see there are a little bit advertisements there. So that would be a great place to show (the Park District) to the people.” (Mohammad, AS, Pakistan, N-U)*

*“School-wise, there’s nothing in Parkland that says anything about the Park District. If I heard it through Parkland, I think that would be a big deal because a lot of the times it’s like people are always asking ‘Oh, where do we go? Where do you want to hang out?’ No one ever thinks, ‘Hey, let’s go hang out at the park,’ or something.” (Angel, LAT, Puerto Rico, N-U)*

*“Maybe the Park District could coordinate with Parkland and do some classes that Parkland offers, but in the Park District?” (Jane, AS, China, N-U)*

*“I think most of the population are the undergrad students and to appeal to them...most of them are in RSOs (registered student organizations). So maybe reaching to the RSOs to see if they want to host events at one of these parks, because they have cars and they could drive people? The RSO leaders have cars and they can market these parks to the younger generation who will continue that.” (Alice, AS, China, N-U)*

*“In my department, when I was a grad student, they would rent out the lake house every year for our parties. And so you could use the department as a means to host the party there because it’s pretty cheap for them. I remember friends going there (to the Crystal Lake Park) to run afterwards and going out. So, for them, it was just like an introduction...If you wanted to reach out, you could make a specific brochure to send to the departments. ” (Lin, AS, China, N-U)*

*“For visiting scholars who are only here for a year, you could just take them as a group to go see that park because...I mean it’s intimidating for me who live in that area for 10 years to even go by myself to an event. They’re never going to go there by themselves.” (Nadine, AS, N-U) “Yeah, just going by myself, I think it’s something really boring but if there’s a group, it would be good.” (Zainab, AS, Iraq, N-U)*

#### **d. Send e-mail reminders to register**

One of the Asian American interviewees who was a frequent user of the UPD programs suggested contacting the existing users through e-mail and informing them about the new upcoming programs and sign-up deadlines.

*“I would be willing to say, ‘Yes, e-mail me about your activities,’ but they only e-mail me when I’m actually in the activity. What I really need is a reminder, ‘Hey, in two weeks you can sign up for your summer camp and go on this web link,’ and then I would just do it by then. I wouldn’t mind if they kept a list of things I regularly do.*

*And then two weeks before ending of my workout sessions of eight weeks, let me know, 'Oh, you could sign up again, here is the link.' Sometimes they introduce new things so I wouldn't mind getting some e-mails about the new things that have never existed because I've been here so many years and then the things that I usually do that I need to re-register periodically to get that email." (Vivian, AS, Chinese-American, U)*

## **SUMMARY BY ETHNIC GROUP**

### **African Americans**

Social class seemed to play a more important role than racial background in affecting the type and extent of utilization of the UPD programs, facilities and parks among African Americans. African Americans of middle class status were well aware of the resources offered by the UPD, stated that they regularly received UPD program guide in the mail and flyers from their children's schools, paid attention to e-mails sent by the UPD, were aware of the scholarships offered by the UPD, had a good knowledge of their program offering, knew some of the staff members by their first name and were generally pleased with the programs and services offered by the UPD. Parks and pools operated by the UPD were compared in positive terms to parks and pools operated by the Champaign Park District. African American of working class background, and especially residents of the Lierman community, listed a number of constraints limiting their participation in the UPD programs. Cost, transportation, safety, and lack of knowledge of opportunities were the most often mentioned barriers to participation.

### **General recommendations for improvement from all African American participants:**

- Be creative when it comes to lowering prices (e.g., \$1 games or free programs for kids, allow to bring "guests" on pool passes, help with transportation). \$6 pool fee that seems reasonable for middle class people is a prohibitive factor for most working class families.
- Offer more programs for teenagers that go beyond sport. More programs need to be offered for teenage girls (e.g., beauty classes).
- The limit of two scholarships per family is constraining to large families.
- Offer concession stands during busy times; some families spend more than 4 hours at Brookens Gym.

### **Asians**

All of the Asians who attended the focus group with users were professionals and/or of middle class background (two teachers, one attorney, one business manager, one lab manager, and three housewives). Asian non-users included an office support specialist, a conference producer, data curator, a community aid, three Ph.D. students, and a visiting scholar. The users were all very familiar with the UPD parks and program offerings and utilized them frequently. They received information about the UPD offerings from the

activity guides (all received them at their home addresses), flyers (from children's schools), the UPD website and the UPD facebook page, as well as through word of mouth (mainly among visiting scholars and students). They were also proactive in seeking opportunities – called the UPD for more information, registered as soon as the camps and program registration opened. Many of the non-users indicated that they never received the UPD program guide while some revealed they did but had no time or interest in perusing it. The main constraints on the use/visitation among Asian Americans included: lack of time, lack of knowledge of opportunities, cost (among families with children), fear of crime, fear of discrimination against Muslim residents, activities for children not competitive enough, and lack of activities for single adults.

### **General recommendations for improvement from all Asian participants:**

- Be more specific about the purpose of activities geared toward children – introduction to the activity, fun and leisure – not necessarily gaining competitive skills
- Offer more activities for single people.
- Offer more activities that could expose immigrants to the local culture
- Partner with UIUC to provide more information to incoming Asian students, faculty and visiting scholars.
- Make entrances to parks more attractive, provide maps of the parks.
- Make some changes to the activity guide.
- Improve pool hygiene
- Be stricter with enforcing rules and regulations – do not allow food into pool areas
- Offer additional seasonal staff training
- Offer more activities for teenagers
- Offer more volunteer opportunities for teenagers, keep them engaged, offer certificates and other “rewards” for completing volunteer hours.
- Contact existing users through e-mail and inform them about new upcoming programs and deadlines.

### **Latinos**

The group of Latino users interviewed in the study consisted of three stay at home mothers, two people working for the University of Illinois (an Extension specialist and a person employed in the Krannert Center for Performing Arts), one Ph.D. student, and one person who did not reveal her employment. The non-users included four stay at home mothers, a public accountant, a Ph.D. student, and a member of the National Guard. Similarly to interviews with African Americans, social class was a strong determinant of the knowledge and use of UPD programs and parks. While Latinos with professional occupations utilized them frequently and listed few constraints on participation, Latinos of working-class status identified a number of barriers limiting their involvement in UPD programs. The constraints were related primarily to cost, lack of fluency in the English language, lack of time, constraints related to their undocumented status (which limited their ability to apply for UPD scholarships or register on-line and increased their concerns about safety), interracial tensions, transportation, lack of time and scheduling problems, and problems with child care.

### **General recommendations for improvement from all Latino participants:**

- Lower prices, make applying for scholarships easier
- Lower the language and cultural barrier (hire bilingual staff, translate the activity guide, use culture-neutral language in print materials, and provide signs in Spanish)
- Redesign the activity guide

### **Recommendations on how to involve the most disfranchised communities (e.g., Lierman):**

- Involve local youth in activities, it will significantly benefit the community, give kids something productive to do, “take them off the street.”
- Peer and adult mentoring programs are needed – reach out to respected members of the community and involve them; work with them to introduce youth to the UPD programs and facilities.
- Provide safe passage from crime-affected neighborhoods – either transportation or adults who will walk them to the Center (similar to The Chicago Public Schools’ Safe Passage program). Apply for grants to fund the safe passage program. Parents and children need to know that UPD facilities are “safe spaces” in the community.
- Offer interesting activities on the Brookens Gym lawn on the side of the Lierman community – be more visible, offer games (not only structured leagues) that would draw in children from the community; once a few children “break the barrier” and get involved, others will follow. UPD needs to spread the word to these communities that they offer fun, free/discounted, and safe activities.
- Post visible signs on the Brookens Gym lawn on the side of Lierman.
- Distribute brochures and flyers to people in the community.
- UPD should consider bringing supervised games into the neighborhoods. Once the children and parents get to know that the UPD is offering these activities, they can be invited to the gym.
- Increase safety – work with the Urbana Police Department to increase patrols while the children are walking to the Gym and taking part in UPD activities.
- Consider developing a playground in the Lierman community.

## **7. UPD staff members’ cross-cultural competence**

The UPD managers who participated in interviews have been asked “Have you had training related to serving minority users of UPD programs? Do you think you could use additional training? If so, what kind of training would you like to receive?” The majority of the interviewed managers recalled attending half-a-day long cultural competency training at the Virginia Theatre organized by the Champaign Park District.

In addition, some of the staff attended sessions at the Illinois Parks and Recreation conference and at some environmental conferences. However, some interviewees stated

that only about one third of the employees attend such conferences, so many have not been exposed to additional trainings.

*“We all try to attend the IPRA Association (conference) but also when we go to environmental education conferences. We try to look at that because that’s (diversity) definitely a topic across the nation.” (Employee 1)*

Employee 2 countered: *“Another thing I was going to say, Employee 1 talked about different training that they get at conferences and that kind of thing, but that’s only applicable to, I’d say a third of the employees at the Park District which are exempt (salaried) employees who go to these... And then we’ve got all of our part time people who never go to any training like that.” (Employee 2)*

Employee 1 replied that some of their part time staff attended the IPRA conference and that *“there are other trainings that those staff go to as well... For conferences, at least from our staff, is they get to budget what they would like to attend unless there’s something that’s come from [the Management] that says, ‘Everybody needs to be going to this.’ So, those are made available as funding allows. I always encourage staff if there’s something they want to go to and can find funding and find a way to make it less costly for the District, then we’ll look for those as well, but as far as strictly just on diversity, I’ve been to conferences where the concentration has been just on diversity.”(Employee 1)*

Another employee of the Park District added:

*“I do not recall participating in anything like that. We’ve had some generalized customer service trainings which I think those principles can apply pretty well to everybody. But yeah, I can’t think of anything specifically related to diversity that I’ve attended. Obviously, I can’t speak to what happened before I was here.” (Employee 3)*

Employee 4 talked about UPD’s tight budget limiting training opportunities:

*“There’s nothing much of a training budget for everybody. There is a training budget but it’s not an enormous training budget and there are other priorities. That sometimes get -- so I do, yeah. So of course, that would be a great wish list item.” (Employee 4)*

Asked if he/she thought the Park District staff needed additional cultural competence training, Employee 5 responded,

*“Yeah, I think in general inclusivity, it’s probably something that should be addressed. I think we’re getting there and becoming more aware of you can’t reach everyone the same way, you can’t teach everyone the same way. You can’t interact with everyone the same way. But I think some training would be super helpful,*

*especially if there's hands on component to it, instead of just sitting and playing with your phone while you're watching the speaker.”(Employee 5)*

## **8. Cooperation between the Urbana Park District and other community stakeholders**

The interviewed UPD managers have been asked “Does the UPD cooperate with other stakeholders in the Champaign-Urbana area? In response to this question, a number of formal and informal collaborations have been identified: with schools, community organizations, Child Care Resource Services (CCRS), Champaign Park District, YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, local churches, Champaign-Urbana Public Health District, Carle Hospital, and Clark Lindsey Village.

### **a. Schools**

Employees of the Anita Purveys Nature Center, Brookens Gym, and Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center described their collaboration with the local schools.

*“We have environmental programs, so we have a person who’s in charge of school programs, that’s Heidi. So, that’s usually elementary, preschool through elementary. We have group visits which can be any kind of group but it tends to be more preschools.” (Employee 2)*

*“We (the Nature Center) got a pretty good Asian population, especially for our preschool camps. Years ago, we had a camp that was at King’s School that the Park District facilitated.” (Employee 1)*

*“Champaign schools are the biggest client for school tours that come (to the Nature Center). They come here and at Meadowbrook and then a few Urbana schools. Yes, they’re entirely elementary. I do K through fifth grade mostly. And then some private schools within those areas as well.” (Employee 2)*

*“Mostly -- our Splash program, our after school program because that focuses primarily on those users. ...it’s at the school. So it’s six different schools in the district. (Employee 5) “Well, we do get Canaan Academy. (Employee 7) “The school grades come over. They get recess at our playground.” (Employee 8) “Yes, we do collaborative after school programs, the grant funded through the state, so it’s with Urbana School District and with us, and Leal School in particular, it’s home of the dual language program. We also have it at Prairie, Dr. Williams, sorry. So kids who are Latino or are identified by teachers or administration as being at risk, are offered a spot in our free after school program. For us, we provide one day of instruction but the school district also does three other days. The kids can come in and they can do swim lessons, they can do craft projects, a whole variety of things. We actually did a soccer program too, so families could come twice a week at Leal. It’s after school, they’re not leaving and they can participate in soccer and then on Saturdays, they*

*could be in our full league but without paying anything. We even provided jerseys and the cleats, and all kinds of stuff that they needed. And with that program, they also get a free dinner and transportation home. That program in particular is really amazing. So the after school programs aren't registration based. Registration is handled by the school district, so I would say the demographic varies a little different. The Asian population -- maybe 25%. Black is probably 40% and then the rest is Latino." (Employee 5)*

*"We do reach middle school populations through our Splash program and as a joint program with the school district. So they started it and then we helped. We've been in it from the beginning providing recreational opportunities and then they have some teachers teaching things and we have the Park District to do things. Lots and lots of kids participate in this and they get exposure to things that they wouldn't normally get. And then one of the things that's good about Splash is that there are no financial barriers and there are no transportation barriers. They get bussed. [Interviewer: Because the school provides transportation?] Correct. If you have a free reduced or eligible for fee waivers, you don't pay for Splash. So those barriers are removed and it's right after school. So it's either one hour after school or two depending on... [Interviewer: For how long?] A school year. Three sessions a year. So it's like a six-week, and a six-week with breaks." (Employee 9)*

*The baseball team will use Brookens Gym and then Employee 10 has the softball team meet a couple of night for games. We don't charge them. And then, we have soccer practices at their sites. Basketball practices. They don't charge us." (Employee 4) "Basically, anything that either one of us wants to use each other's facilities. I mean all their high school baseball games are played on our field. [Interviewee: You don't charge them for it?] No, they actually do pay a little bit for prep of the field but not really, not much. And then, occasionally, they'll use our gym for cheerleader practice or the softball field for a softball game if they need lights. But they don't use our facilities very much and we don't really use -- we use theirs for basketball practice from January to March a lot but other than that we don't use the school so much... Juda School would rent our gym all the time. They use it every day after school because they have so many teams and there aren't gym space still even with their -- I don't know if their stuff is finished yet. Pretty sure it's junior high that practices here most of the time... They boy's and girl's basketball and volleyball here practicing, so I don't know if it's junior high. We see them all the time. I think it's a mix a bit of whoever gets this place that day." (Employee 10)*

## **b. Community Organizations**

Jettie Rhodes Day, Rock the Block, and Bike to Work Day have been identified as events organized in collaboration with community partners. The employees of the Brookens Gym also described their outreach efforts to the Lierman community and numerous organizations they volunteered for.

*“Jettie Rhodes Day is a community partnership, collaboration with a church. It is basically like a community-wide get-together. They’re trying to get people in that neighborhood around King Park which I believe is majority African-American take time together and enjoy their community and enjoy the park. So it’s not us doing it but we’re -- I guess you could say helping facilitate. Jettie Rhodes Day, it’s definitely a community partnership event.” (Employee 3)*

*“We do a big event on King Park called Jettie Rhodes Day and the Urbana Police Department is involved with that and the Fire Department comes to that event, comes to the planning, meetings. And that is an event that is directed towards that neighborhood and primarily the Black population. That event has grown because we have the family involved and actually LaShaunda, she’s on our board now. Her family is involved in that activity because Jettie Rhodes was her grandmother. She was on the Park District’s Advisory Committee and then died of cancer, so this event is named after her. When that family got involved, and they, and their friends and their volunteers, they actually do flyers, door to door.” (Employee 8)*

*“Typically, events of that nature are usually held at Crystal Lake Park because of its larger size, better parking, and things like that, but because the Rock the Block event’s purpose is to bring out the neighbors... I don’t want to say it’s an exception that we make but it is a little bit more unusual.” (Employee 3)*

*“Our fitness coordinator also works with the Bicycle Coalition.” (Employee 7)*  
*“They’re the ones who do the Bike to Work Day and they’re doing more. It used to be all day, now they do it more than that.” (Employee 8)*

*“All of our program level staff ... we all sit on some sort of community organization like boards or committees and we do a lot of outside volunteer work. I was on the board of 40 North Arts Council and now our development manager is the president of that board. But I do volunteer work for like the Ace Awards and the Boneyard Arts Festival. And Erica does the Read Across America. So we definitely get involved with lots of different organizations.” (Employee 4)*

*“I’m on the Goals Committee (of the Champaign Community Coalition). And then I’m on a subcommittee that’s lead by the Prairie Center and it’s for kind of like a youth subcommittee of wellness initiative. We’re just now meeting again this Friday and that’s to try to reach -- this is kind of similar to what we’re just talking about. Parents who are difficult to reach and may not be active or engaged and try to get information to them on how to talk to their kids from the undeserved population about health choices and that kind of stuff. Another thing that we do through the Collation is the 3C Camp and that’s with the Campus Rec. There’s like the Boys and Girls Club, Champaign Park District, us, and a couple of churches.” (Employee 4)*

*“Another group is the Lierman Neighborhood Action Committee which is kind of wane in recent years but it’s like a community. And Robin Arbiter was the head of that and we worked with her a little bit on just trying to get... we got sports*



*equipment for the group, like baseball gloves and that kind of stuff. And then we worked with them a few years ago to try to find open times if they could. There was a guy that did the gardens, the garden plot in the corner, and then he was trying to take a group of kids out to do softball and stuff on the days. And we got him some equipment and told him to go for that. And then, last year was, I worked with Jamil (sp?) and got their bus so that we didn't have to worry about them going stops and then missing times and all that kind of stuff.” (Employee 4)*

### **c. Champaign Park District, YMCA and Boys & Girls Club**

Three employees of the UPD described some of their problematic interactions with the Champaign Park District, YMCA, and Boys & Girls Club – coordinating the use of dog parks and visits of children to the Anita Purves Nature Center.

*(The Anita Purveys Nature Center has) “Camps from other places like YMCA and Champaign Park District and those types of people.” (Employee 6)*

*[Describing visit of children from the Champaign Park District to the Nature Center] “And the Champaign Park District Douglas Center’s camp... I’ve had some very negative experiences. Adult staff has had the kids go back and write apology letters to us and they’re a very diverse group. [Interviewer: What did they do?] Well, not listening. They’re here for a presentation... Just being rowdy and rough.” (Employee 2)*

*“The other group that you wanted to know about, we’ve worked with Dan Moyer’s Boys and Girls Club before on some service project and have had -- are much more or less willing to do so because the kids were not only disrespectful to the adults, but they were damaging to the environment. Again, the leader wasn’t doing anything. These kids, they were coming to help take care of the environment, but they could care less what they were doing.” (Employee 2).*

*“I’m our first point of contact for a lot of dog park stuff. And so, I am like the counterpart at the Champaign Park District where we have to coordinate on...if there is a dog park incident or something of that nature because it’s a reciprocal agreement between the two parks. Sometimes, like if we have a dog park incident reported to us and we can’t find that dog in question or whatever registered in our records we’ll look to their registration records and if we can’t find it. We’ll say, ‘We’ll check your daily admission receipts and we’ll see if we can figure out who this person is.’ Because sometime members from our park will cause trouble at Champaign and vice versa.” (Employee 3)*

### **d. Child Care Resource Services (CCRS)**

The interviewees mentioned that CCRS was providing scholarships for some of the camp participants.

*“Child Care Resource Services is paying for scholarships for some camp participants. So, there’s a lot of hoops that have to be jumped through, but once a parent is aware of that ability, there are quite a few parents that use it every summer.” (Employee 1)*

**e. Churches**

UPD employees also talked about collaborations with local churches, something they believed should be explored more in the future.

*“And also we do a lot of stuff through the churches. So we have different people from different churches that sit on the committee that help plan that event too. So that’s kind of one of our big events where we get a big exposure.” (Employee 8)*

*“I think that churches are an avenue that we need to explore further. I have been to churches during the program so they request somebody to come in and do something for their group on a Wednesday night or something, but they often have daycares and it can be very diverse places, so I think that’s something that I would like to explore further. (Employee 2)*

**f. Champaign-Urbana Public Health District**

The Public Health Department was responsible for providing breakfast and snacks for the UPD camp participants. The UPD employees, in turn, distributed information on the events organized by the Health District.

*“We provide free lunch and free breakfast and snack for all of our summer camp programs. And then the other ones, the other camps that are outside of this building provide free breakfast and free lunch. I’m sorry, free snack. Through the Public Health. And then we have their flyers up there for week programs and those available in French, English and Spanish. Whenever they get like good information, like Saturday clinics or something, we try to push and promote that so our people can kind of pair up with them and get out there.” (Employee 5)*

**g. Carle Hospital**

Interviewees also described their “minimal” level of collaboration with the Carle Hospital whose class was hosted at the Phillips Center. They believed that such collaboration should be expanded in the future.

*“Well, from fitness, I would love to collaborate with Carle. [Interviewer: Have you reached out to them?] Yeah. Well, we kind of do minimally. We host a class. They have a class at the Phillips Center in an afternoon slot that basically doesn’t get*

*anything the same way. I've met with the physical therapy director over there. We're trying to figure out some way to do it or maybe they did help us with equipment or we use that place for like staff, wellness, like a facility for our staff if they want to use it as a benefit. But I would like to partner with them more as kind of like...it's a wellness, it's a preventative; how can the Park District help their clients, (organize) cardio activities?"(Employee 4)*

#### **h. Clark Lindsey Village Retirement Community**

Lastly, past collaboration with the Clark Lindsey Village Retirement Community was described.

*"Same with Clark Lindsey, we worked with recently in fitness. We did a staff class and we also did a chair, like a get set and be fit kind of thing. And now, we just have a like a get set charity yoga class at Philips but we don't have those partnerships anymore with Clark Lindsey... We'll do it again down the road. But they're up running up their own fitness. They have their own center there." (Employee 4)*

**Appendix A**  
**Interview Script**  
**UPD Managers**

**Interview Script**  
**UPD Managers**

1. What is your position with the UPD?
2. How long have you been at the current position at UPD?
3. How often do you interact with minority users of UPD programs and facilities?
4. What kind of interactions do you have with minority users of UPD programs and facilities?
5. Do you feel comfortable interacting with minority users of UPD programs and facilities?  
If not, what kind of skills and/or knowledge do you think you are lacking?
6. Do you experience problems interacting with minority users of UPD programs? Can you give me specific examples of problematic interactions?
  - How did you try to overcome these problems?
7. Have you had training related to serving minority users of UPD programs?
8. Do you think you could use additional training? If so, what kind of training would you like to receive?
9. Have you had to deal with an inter-racial issues and/or problems among users?
10. Do you see much racial integration among users? What about racial segregation?
11. 10. Does your department do anything extra to reach minority users for UPD programs? If yes please explain?
12. How many of your staff are proficient in Spanish?
13. Is the information on your website provided in multiple languages?
14. Do you provide incentives for participation such as medical insurance, scholarships, financial aid (discounts), scouts visiting games?

15. Does the UPD cooperate with other stakeholders in the Champaign-Urbana area (e.g., school districts, faith-based organizations, Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, police department, Champaign County Community Coalition)?
- Can you give me examples of a successful cooperation?
  - Can you give me examples of a cooperation that was problematic?
  - Is there anything that can be done to improve those collaborations?
  - What are the barriers to building successful collaborations?
  - What do you think can be done to build successful community collaborations to serve the minority constituents?

**Appendix B**  
**Focus Groups Script**  
**English Version**  
**Users**

## Focus Group Script Users

- How long have you been living in Urbana?
- Which part of Urbana do you live in?
- What UPD programs and facilities does your family currently use or would like to use (adults, children)?
- Which programs and facilities offered by UPD do you and your family/children like best and why?
- How did you first hear of the UPD programs and facilities?
- Why do you participate in programs offered by UPD (why do you sign up your children for UPD programs?) What do you think you and your family get out of participation in recreation programs offered by UPD? Can you elaborate on the specific programs and facilities?
- When you think about signing up your children for UPD programs, what are you looking for in the programs?
- Does the UPD offer any incentives for participation (e.g., medical insurance, scholarships, financial aid) that are important to you?
- We know you participate in some UPD **programs**, but are there things that keep you from participating even more or making you more satisfied from participation?  
*[Interviewer: Provide examples of UPD programs]*  
(prompts/examples):
  - o Cost / too expensive
  - o Lack of time
  - o Lack of childcare
  - o Feeling unwelcome in programs
    - Racial and ethnic background of the staff
    - Level of cultural competence among the staff
  - o Friendliness of the staff
  - o Professionalism of the staff
  - o Activities that are not interesting to me/my family and/or not culturally sensitive
  - o Activities that do not meet my expectations (please specify...)
  - o Ease of accessing programs



- Transportation problems
  - Timing of the programs
  - Fear of crime
  - Having to rely on your children for translation
  - Others?
10. Are there things that prevent you from visiting the UPD **facilities** more often?  
*[Interviewer: Provide examples of UPD facilities]* (prompts/examples):
- Cost / too expensive
  - Feeling unwelcome in parks
    - Racial and ethnic background of the park staff
    - Level of cultural competence among the park staff
  - Quality of parks and facilities
  - Availability of parks and facilities
  - Ease of park and facility access
  - Transportation
  - Fear of crime
  - Having to rely on your children for translation?
  - Others?
11. Is the appearance of the UPD facilities important to you? Is it important to you that the décor of facilities represents your culture?
12. How well do you know and interact with other parents and families that use the UPD parks/facilities/programs?
- If/when you do interact with other parents and families, are they of the same race/ethnicity? Does this have an impact on which programs you and your family use?
  - Do the programs have a welcoming and friendly community feel or does it feel like each race is in their own bubble?
13. What UPD **parks** does your family visit?
14. Which UPD parks do you and your family/children like best and why?
15. Why do you visit UPD parks? What do you think you and your family get out of visiting UPD parks?
16. Are there things that prevent you from visiting the UPD parks more often?  
*[Interviewer: Provide examples of UPD parks]* (prompts/examples):
- Cost / too expensive
  - Feeling unwelcome in parks
    - Racial and ethnic background of the park staff

- Level of cultural competence among the park staff
- o Quality of parks and facilities
- o Availability of parks and facilities
- o Ease of park and facility access
- o Transportation
- o Fear of crime
- o Having to rely on your children for translation?
- o Others?

17. Do you feel like there are racial tensions in Urbana?

If YES:

Does it affect the decisions you make about which UPD programs to sign up for or which parks or facilities to visit?

18. Have you witnessed or heard about inter-racial conflicts at the UPD park or program?

19. Are the UPD programs that you participate in mostly racially integrated or segregated?

20. Do you think the UPD helps, hurts, or has no impact on race relations in the community?

21. Do you ever use the Douglass Center / Park in Champaign? If yes, why?

22. Have you ever heard of the Brookens complex?

If YES:

- What does it represent to you?
- Does the jail and government offices have an impact on your use?

23. What could the UPD do to make its programs and facilities better for you and your children? Are there any programs and facilities that are lacking that you would like the UPD offer?

**Appendix C**  
**Focus Groups Script**  
**Users**  
**Spanish Version**

## Focus Group Script

### Users

- ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva viviendo en Urbana?
- ¿En qué parte de Urbana vive?
- ¿Qué programas, parques, o edificios del distrito de Urbana usan usted y su familia o les gustaría usar (adultos, niños)?
- ¿Qué programas y edificios ofrecidos por el distrito les gusta más a usted y su familia y porque?
- ¿Cómo se enteró por primera vez de sus programas y edificios?
- ¿Por qué participan en los programas que ofrecen? ¿O porque inscriben a sus hijos en los programas?  
¿Qué buscan sacar de los programas en los que participan?
- Cuando piensan en inscribir a sus hijos en uno de los programas del distrito, ¿Qué están buscando en los programas?
- ¿Ofrece la UPD incentivos para la participación (por ejemplo, seguro médico, becas, ayuda financiera) que son importantes para usted?
- Sabemos que participa en algunos **programas** de la UPD, pero ¿hay cosas que le impiden participar aún más o que no le satisfagan? *[Interviewer: Provide examples of UPD programs]:*
  - Costo/demasiado caro
  - No hay tiempo suficiente
  - Ninguna guardería
  - No se siente bienvenido

- Antecedentes raciales y étnicos del personal
  - Amabilidad del personal
  - Las actividades no son interesantes para usted o su familia
  - Las actividades no cumplen con sus expectativas (por favor especifique...)
  - No está cerca de usted
  - Problemas de transporte
  - Los tiempos de los programas no son convenientes para usted
  - Miedo al crimen
  - Tener que confiar en sus hijos para que lo traduzcan
  - ¿otros?
- ¿Hay cosas que le impidan visitar los **edificios** más a menudo? [*Interviewer: Provide examples of UPD facilities*] (prompts/examples):
- Costo/demasiado caro
  - No es bienvenido en los parques
  - Antecedentes raciales y étnicos del personal
  - Calidad de los parques y edificios
  - Disponibilidad de parques y edificios
  - No están abiertos cuando quiere usarlos
  - Transporte
  - Miedo al crimen
  - Tener que depender de sus hijos para la traducción?
  - ¿Otros?

- ¿La apariencia de los edificios y parques es importante para usted?
- ¿Es importante para usted ver gente como usted o de su misma cultura en los programas, edificios, o parques?
- ¿Qué tan bien conoce o interactúa con otros padres y familias que usan los programas y edificios de la UPD?
  - o Cuando habla con otros padres y familias, ¿son de la misma raza/etnia? ¿Esto es de importancia para usted?
  - o ¿Están los programas en los que participa racialmente integrados o segregados?
  - o ¿Le dan los programas la sensación de bienvenida o siente que cada raza está en su propia burbuja?
- ¿Qué **parques** de la UPD visita usted y su familia?
- ¿Qué **parques** les gustan más a usted y su familia y porque?
- ¿Por qué visita estos **parques**? ¿Qué cree que usted/familia obtienen visitando estos parques?
- ¿Hay cosas que le impiden visitar los parques de la UPD más a menudo?

*[Interviewer: Provide examples of UPD parks] (prompts/examples):*

- Costo/demasiado caro
- No es bienvenido en los parques
  - o Antecedentes raciales y étnicos del personal
- Calidad de los parques y edificios
- Disponibilidad de parques y edificios
- No están abiertos cuando quiere usarlos
- Transporte

- Miedo al crimen
  - Tener que depender de sus hijos para la traducción?
  - ¿Otros?
- ¿Siente que hay tensiones raciales en Urbana?
 

Si es el caso:

¿Afecta sus decisiones acerca de que programas en los que se inscribe o los edificios/parques que visita?
- ¿Ha sido testigo u oído de conflictos interraciales en los parques, edificios o programas de la UPD?
- ¿Cree usted que la UPD ayuda, lastima o no tiene ningún impacto en las relaciones raciales en la comunidad?
- ¿A utiliza alguna vez el centro Douglas parques en Champaign? ¿Si es así, por qué?
- ¿Cuál es su impresión del edificio Brookens?
  - ¿la prisión y las oficinas gubernamentales cercanas le molestan?
- ¿Qué podría hacer la UPD para que sus programas, parques, y edificios sean mejores para usted y sus hijos? ¿Hay programas que no ofrecen que le gustaría que ofrecieran?

**Appendix D**  
**Focus Group Script**  
**Non-Users**  
**English Version**



## Focus Group Script Non-Users

- Have you ever **heard** of the UPD? *[Interviewer: Describe mission of the UPD; talk about programs and facilities; distribute brochures]*

If NOT:

- How could the UPD reach out to people like you?

If YES:

- What do you know about the UPD?
- What's your impression / view of the UPD? Is it positive? Negative?
- Do you know anyone who uses UPD facilities or programs?
- Does the UPD have a good reputation in your neighborhood and/or among your friends and family?
- Have you ever **participated** in the UPD programs in the past? Have you ever visited their parks or perhaps used their facilities?

If YES (but quit):

- What programs were you or your children enrolled in and when?
- What facilities have you used in the past?
- What made you stop participating in their programs or using their facilities?
  - o *[Interviewer: Explore individual constraints listed below]*
- What could the UPD do to help you and your family participate in its programs and use its facilities again? Are there any programs and facilities that are lacking that you would like the UPD offer?

If NOT (never participated)

- Were you simply not interested in participation?
  - o What could the UPD do to interest you in their programs and facilities?

OR

- Have you considered participating but decided not to participate?
  - o What things prevented you and/or your family from participating in the UPD programs or using its facilities?  
Things such as:
    - o Cost / too expensive
    - o Lack of time
    - o Lack of childcare
    - o Feeling unwelcome in programs
    - Racial and ethnic background of the staff
    - Level of cultural competence among the staff
    - o Friendliness of the staff
    - o Professionalism of the staff
    - o Activities that are not interesting to me/my family and/or not culturally sensitive
    - o Activities that do not meet my expectations (please specify...)
    - o Ease of accessing programs
    - o Transportation problems
    - o Timing of the programs
    - o Fear of crime
    - o Having to rely on your children for translation
    - o Level of participation too low / lower opportunity for being recruited to professional teams later on
    - o Appearance of facilities
    - o Others?
  
- Would you consider participating in the UPD programs or using its facilities in the future?  
If you were going to sign up for a program, what would you want? What would you be looking for in the program? What would you want to get out of it?  
  
What could the UPD do to help you and your family participate in its programs or using its facilities? Are there any programs and facilities that are lacking that you would like the UPD offer?
  
- When it comes to leisure and recreation, where do you usually go to find resources in the community?  
What do you like about the programs that you participate in?

Why do you go there instead of using UPD offerings?

**Appendix E**  
**Focus Group Script**  
**Non-Users**  
**Spanish Version**

## Focus Group Script

### Non-Users

- ¿Cuánto tiempo lleva viviendo en Urbana?
- ¿En qué parte de Urbana vive?
- ¿Alguna vez ha oído hablar de la UPD? *[Interviewer: Describe mission of the UPD; talk about programs and facilities; distribute brochures]*

*El Distrito del Parque Urbana supervisa todos los parques y las instalaciones en la Ciudad de Urbana y ofrece programas de recreación para sus residentes.*

*Proporcionan programas acuáticos en el Centro Acuático de Urbana y el Centro Acuático Familiar Crystal Lake Park, programas atléticos como fútbol juvenil y béisbol, y programas para adultos como voleibol y kickball.*

*También ofrecen programas de bienestar y fitness (aerobics, entrenamiento, fuerza y acondicionamiento, Tai Chi, aeróbic acuático, yoga y Zumba).*

*La UPD también ofrece programas de artes culturales tales como ballet juvenil y clases de tap. Para los adultos ofrecen clases de danza del vientre, bailes folclóricos, ballet, tap, y más.*

*La UPD también dirige un Centro de Naturaleza donde ofrece programas ambientales para niños y adultos. Para los niños (preK-5to grado), ofrecen campamentos para días de descanso de primavera y campamentos de día de la naturaleza y un programa de liderazgo de verano para los adolescentes. Para adultos ofrecen actividades de observación de aves, paseos en bicicleta y paseos por la naturaleza.*

Si no:

- ¿Cómo podrían llegar a gente como usted?

Si es el caso:

- ¿Qué sabes de la UPD?
- ¿Qué opinas de ellos? ¿Es positivo? ¿Negativo?

- ¿Conoces a alguien que use sus edificios o programas?
- ¿Tiene UPD una buena reputación en su comunidad o con sus amigos y familiares?
- ¿Alguna vez ha participado en alguno de sus programas? ¿Alguna vez ha utilizado sus parques o edificios?
  - Si es el caso (pero renuncio):
    - ¿Cuáles?
    - ¿Qué edificios ha usado?
    - ¿Qué parques ha visitado?
    - ¿Qué hizo que dejara de usar los programas/edificios?
      - *[Interviewer: Explore individual constraints listed below]*
    - ¿Qué podrían hacer para que usted empezara a usarlos o visitarlos otra vez?
    - ¿Hay programas que le gustaría que ofrecieran?

Si no (y nunca a participado)

- ¿no está interesado en participar?
  - ¿Que podrían hacer para que usted se interesara en participar?

**O**

- ¿Había pensado en participar, y luego decidió no hacerlo?
  - ¿Qué cosas le impidieron participar en sus programas o usar sus edificios?
    - Costo/demasiado caro
    - No hay tiempo suficiente
    - Ninguna guardería
    - No se siente bienvenido
    - Antecedentes raciales y étnicos del personal
    - Amabilidad del personal

- Las actividades no son interesantes para usted o su familia
  - Las actividades no cumplen con sus expectativas (por favor especifique...)
  - No está cerca de usted
  - Problemas de transporte
  - Los tiempos de los programas no son convenientes para usted
  - Miedo al crimen
  - Tener que confiar en sus hijos para que lo traduzcan
  - No es lo suficiente competitivo/no hay una gran oportunidad de para que mi hijo(a) sea reclutado a equipos profesionales.
  - Apariencia del edificio
  - ¿Otros?
- ¿En el futuro participaría en los programas de la UPD o usaría sus edificios?  
Si usted de fuera a inscribir en algo, ¿en que se inscribiría? ¿Qué busca de un programa?
- ¿Cuándo se trata de recreación, ¿Dónde en su comunidad acude?  
¿Qué le gusta de los programas en los que participa?
- ¿Por qué va ahí en vez de usar los programas de la UPD?

**Appendix F**  
**Consent Form**  
**Interviews**



Dear Sir/Madam:

We would like to invite you to participate in a research study being conducted by the Diversity Research Laboratory and the Office of Recreation & Park Resources at the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The purpose of the study is to assess the needs, interests, benefits, and constraints regarding the utilization of Urbana Park Districts' programs among underserved residents. The results of the study will help the Urbana Park District to better understand the personal preferences, expectations, needs, and barriers of diverse visitors.

We would be truly grateful if you would help us in our research by participating in an interview. The interview will take approximately 30-60 minutes and will take place on the premises of the Urbana Park District. In the interview you will be asked questions regarding your cross-cultural competence and your opinions on the level of cooperation between the Urbana Park District and other community stakeholders.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate nor is there any risk involved in the study. If for any reason you wish to withdraw from participation in the study, you may do so at any time. Furthermore, you can skip any questions that you prefer not to answer. Your participation in the interview will not affect your employment, relationship with, status, etc. with the Urbana Park District and your employer will not know who participated or who said what during the interviews.

**Will my study-related information be kept confidential?**

Yes, but not always. In general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to disclose information about you. For example, if required by laws or University Policy, study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:

- The university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- University and state auditors, and Departments of the university responsible for oversight of research;

We will carefully protect your privacy and will take steps to ensure that the information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Names will not be recorded on the interview recordings and a unique identification number will be assigned to each recording. Access to data files will be limited to members of the research team only. All interviews will be audio recorded and the recordings will be erased immediately after transcription. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet. Information obtained from the study may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference, but names or identifying information of the participants will not be revealed. The results of this study will be disseminated through a report to the Urbana Park District, scientific publications and conferences.

If you have any questions about the study you may contact me at 217-244-5644 or e-mail me at [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu).

If you decide to participate in this study, please sign below. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records. We thank you very much in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Monika Stodolska, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism  
104 Huff Hall; 1206 South Fourth Street  
Champaign, IL 61842  
Tel: 217-244-5644  
e-mail: stodolsk@illinois.edu

**YES:** I have received a copy of this letter. I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to be a part of the study on Increasing Involvement among Underrepresented Groups in Parks and Recreation Programs.

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(Signature)

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(Date)

---

(Printed name)

\_\_\_ I agree to be recorded during the interview

**Appendix G**  
**Consent Form**  
**Focus Group Users**

Dear Sir/Madam:

We would like to invite you to participate in a research study being conducted by the Diversity Research Laboratory and the Office of Recreation & Park Resources at the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The purpose of the study is to assess the needs, interests, benefits, and constraints regarding the utilization of Urbana Park Districts' programs among underserved residents. The results of the study will help the Urbana Park District to better understand the personal preferences, expectations, needs, and barriers of diverse visitors. The Urbana Park District will use the results of the study to serve you and your family better!

We would be truly grateful if you would help us in our research by participating in a focus group. The focus group will take approximately 1-2 hours and will take place on the premises of the Urbana Park District. Those who complete the focus group will receive daily free pool passes for their participation. In the focus group you will be asked questions concerning your recreational needs and interests, the barriers to accessing recreation programs and facilities offered by the Urbana Park District, and the benefits of participation in recreation programs offered by the Urbana Park District.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate nor is there any risk involved in the study. If for any reason you wish to withdraw from participation in the study, you may do so at any time. Furthermore, you can skip any questions that you prefer not to answer.

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?

Yes, but not always. In general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to disclose information about you. For example, if required by laws or University Policy, study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:

- The university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- University and state auditors, and Departments of the university responsible for oversight of research;

Moreover, the researchers will keep everything said during the focus group confidential but we can't guarantee that the other participants will do the same.

We will carefully protect your privacy and will take steps to ensure that the information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Names will not be recorded on the focus group recordings and a unique identification number will be assigned to each recording. Access to data files will be limited to members of the research team only. All focus groups will be audio recorded and the recordings will be erased immediately after transcription. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet. Information obtained from the study may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference, but names or identifying information of the participants will not be revealed. The results of this study will be disseminated through a report to the Urbana Park District, scientific publications and conferences.

If you have any questions about the study you may contact me at 217-244-5644 or e-mail me at [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu).

If you decide to participate in this study, please sign below. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records. We thank you very much in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Monika Stodolska, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism  
104 Huff Hall; 1206 South Fourth Street  
Champaign, IL 61842  
Tel: 217-244-5644  
e-mail: [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu)

YES: I have received a copy of this letter. I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to be a part of the study on Increasing Involvement among Underrepresented Groups in Parks and Recreation Programs.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed name)

\_\_\_ I agree to be recorded during the focus group

**Appendix H**  
**Consent Form**  
**Focus Group Non-Users**

Dear Sir/Madam:

We would like to invite you to participate in a research study being conducted by the Diversity Research Laboratory and the Office of Recreation & Park Resources at the Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). The purpose of the study is to assess the needs, interests, benefits, and constraints regarding the utilization of Urbana Park Districts' programs among underserved residents. The results of the study will help the Urbana Park District to better understand the personal preferences, expectations, needs, and barriers of diverse visitors. The Urbana Park District will use the results of the study to serve you and your family better!

We would be truly grateful if you would help us in our research by participating in a focus group. The focus group will take approximately 1-2 hours and will take place on the premises of the Urbana Park District. Those who complete the focus group will receive \$25 gift cards to Walmart for their participation. In the focus group you will be asked questions concerning your recreational needs and interests, the barriers to accessing recreation programs and facilities offered by the Urbana Park District, and the potential benefits of participation in recreation programs offered by the Urbana Park District.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for choosing not to participate nor is there any risk involved in the study. If for any reason you wish to withdraw from participation in the study, you may do so at any time. Furthermore, you can skip any questions that you prefer not to answer.

**Will my study-related information be kept confidential?**

Yes, but not always. In general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to disclose information about you. For example, if required by laws or University Policy, study information which identifies you and the consent form signed by you may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:

- The university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- University and state auditors, and Departments of the university responsible for oversight of research;

Moreover, the researchers will keep everything said during the focus group confidential but we can't guarantee that the other participants will do the same.

We will carefully protect your privacy and will take steps to ensure that the information collected will be kept strictly confidential. Names will not be recorded on the focus group recordings and a unique identification number will be assigned to each recording. Access to data files will be limited to members of the research team only. All focus groups will be audio recorded and the recordings will be erased immediately after transcription. Data will be stored in a locked cabinet. Information obtained from the study may be published in an academic journal or presented at a scholarly conference, but names or identifying information of the participants will not be revealed. The results of this study will be disseminated through a report to the Urbana Park District, scientific publications and conferences.

If you have any questions about the study you may contact me at 217-244-5644 or e-mail me at [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu). If you have any questions about your rights in this study, please contact the University of Illinois Institutional Review Board at 217-333-2670 or via email at [irb@illinois.edu](mailto:irb@illinois.edu).

If you decide to participate in this study, please sign below. Please keep a copy of this letter for your records. We thank you very much in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Monika Stodolska, Ph.D.  
Professor  
Department of Recreation, Sport and Tourism  
104 Huff Hall; 1206 South Fourth Street  
Champaign, IL 61842  
Tel: 217-244-5644  
e-mail: stodolsk@illinois.edu

**YES:** I have received a copy of this letter. I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to be a part of the study on Increasing Involvement among Underrepresented Groups in Parks and Recreation Programs.

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(Signature)

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(Date)

---

(Printed name)

\_\_\_ I agree to be recorded during the focus group



## **Appendixes I-L**

### **Flyers**



**Dear Urbana Residents!**

**The Urbana Park District wants to learn about the needs and interests of people who do not use their programs and parks. If you are an African American, Asian, or Latino and do not use the Park District's programs or parks, we would like to invite you to participate in a 1-hour long meeting. Your answers will remain completely confidential, but your concerns will be heard by those who can make a difference! All participants will receive a \$25 gift card to Walmart.**

**If you would like to take part in a meeting (to be scheduled at a time and place convenient for you) please call Kim or Monika at (217) 333-5201 or (217) 244-5644. You can also e-mail us at [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu) or [shinew@illinois.edu](mailto:shinew@illinois.edu).**





## **¡Estimados Residentes de Urbana!**

**El Distrito de Parques Urbana quiere aprender acerca de las necesidades e intereses de las personas que no utilizan los programas y los parques del Distrito. Si usted es africano americano, asiático o latino y no utiliza los programas o parques del Distrito, nos gustaría invitarle a participar en una sesión de 1 hora donde nos podrá decir sus opiniones y preocupaciones. Sus respuestas serán completamente confidenciales, ¡pero serán escuchadas por aquellos que pueden hacer la diferencia! Todos los participantes recibirán una tarjeta de regalo de \$25 a Wal-Mart.**

**Si desea participar en una reunión (que será programado en un momento y lugar conveniente para usted) por favor llame a Leslie Camarillo al (760) 828-1538 o también puede enviarle un correo electrónico a [Lcamari2@illinois.edu](mailto:Lcamari2@illinois.edu).**







**Dear Urbana Residents!**

**The Urbana Park District wants to learn about the needs and interests of people who use their programs and parks. If you are an African American, Asian, or Latino and use the Park District's programs or parks, we would like to invite you to participate in a 1-hour long meeting. Your answers will remain completely confidential, but your concerns will be heard by those who can make a difference! All participants will receive up to 4 FREE PASSES that can be used in Urbana Park District indoor pools.**

**If you would like to take part in a meeting (to be scheduled at a time and place convenient for you) please call Kim or Monika at (217) 333-5201 or (217) 244-5644. You can also e-mail us at [stodolsk@illinois.edu](mailto:stodolsk@illinois.edu) or [shinew@illinois.edu](mailto:shinew@illinois.edu).**





**¡Estimados Residentes de Urbana!**

**El Distrito de Parques Urbana quiere aprender acerca de las necesidades e intereses de las personas que utilizan los programas y los parques del Distrito. Si usted es africano americano, asiático o latino y utiliza los programas o parques del Distrito, nos gustaría invitarle a participar en una sesión de 1 hora donde nos podrán decir sus opiniones y preocupaciones. Sus respuestas serán completamente confidenciales, ¡pero serán escuchadas por aquellos que pueden hacer la diferencia! Todos los que participantes recibirán hasta 4 PASES GRATUITOS que se pueden utilizar en la piscina cubierta del Distrito de Urbana.**

**Si desea participar en una reunión (que será programado en un momento y lugar conveniente para usted) por favor llame a Leslie Camarillo al (760) 828-1538 o también puede enviarle un correo electrónico a [Lcamari2@illinois.edu](mailto:Lcamari2@illinois.edu).**

