JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE

2024 RESIDENT SURVEY

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Anne Ludolph

Jefferson County Open Space

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INTRODUCTION

The 2024 Jefferson County Open Space Resident (JCOS) Survey represents a collaborative effort to gather insights from the community on the use, perception, and future priorities for open space and public lands within Jefferson County, Colorado. This survey continues Jefferson County Open Space's commitment to periodically assess resident sentiment and preferences, providing a valuable basis for strategic planning and decision-making. Jefferson County Open Space aims to collect this data every 5-years to better understand how to better serve its residents and collect input on priorities from those who live and recreate in the region.

As Jefferson County continues to experience growth, both in population and in the utilization of its open space resources, the demands on these lands have evolved. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vital role of outdoor spaces in residents' lives, increasing their appreciation and dependency on accessible open lands for recreation, mental well-being, and physical health. Recognizing this shift, the survey aimed to capture how residents currently engage with open spaces, their satisfaction with services provided, and their views on funding allocations for future improvements.

The methodology combined statistically valid sampling through a mailed survey, supplemented by a web-based option, and an open-link survey available to all interested residents. This approach ensured a robust dataset that reflects a wide spectrum of resident perspectives. To further enhance accessibility and inclusivity, the survey was offered in both English and Spanish.

Through this comprehensive study, Jefferson County Open Space sought to not only track evolving resident preferences and satisfaction levels but also to pinpoint emerging trends and areas of priority. This report presents findings across several key areas: outdoor activity preferences, service satisfaction, and community opinions on current and future funding. Jefferson County Open Space aims to collect this data every 5 years to align with strategic planning efforts. The County is currently updating the Conservation Greenprint, the 5-year strategic plan, for 2026-2030 and will use this data to inform this important document.

RESEARCH METHODS

The 2024 Jefferson County Resident Survey employed a dual-approach methodology to capture representative input from a diverse range of county residents. Initially, 10,000 randomly selected households received postcards inviting them to participate, followed by 10,000 mailed survey packets that included both a paper survey and an option to complete the survey online via a password-protected link. This multi-mode delivery offered residents flexibility in responding, which helped enhance accessibility and encourage higher participation rates. This methodology is seen as having the ability to be the most representative of a community as it allows respondents to participate by a variety of modes that capture different demographics of the community, responses are verified to a resident in the county and does not have the same type of biases like telephones surveys today. That said, there are additional measures in place to ensure data is weighted against known Census statistics, too.

A total of 1,678 responses were received from the random sample, resulting in a robust response rate that allows for statistically valid insights. This sample size yields a margin of error of +/-2.36% at a 95% confidence level. This means that if the survey were repeated multiple times, the results would be expected to fall within +/- 2.36 percentage points of the reported values, 95 times out of 100. This confidence interval provides Jefferson County Open Space (JCOS) with a reliable gauge of resident opinions, allowing decision-makers to interpret the survey results as representative of the larger population.

In addition to the random sample, an open-link version of the survey was made available online, allowing all interested residents to participate, regardless of whether they were part of the initial random sample. This open-link survey was promoted through various channels, including newsletters, social media, and postings on the county's website. In total, 1,415 responses were gathered through this sample as well. Responses from the open-link survey were analyzed separately to maintain the integrity of the statistically valid data obtained from the random sample.

The survey covered topics such as resident outdoor activity preferences, satisfaction with current services, and perspectives on funding priorities and open space management. These are consistent with some questions asked both in 2011 and 2018; however, new additions were added based priority topics. To support Jefferson County's diverse population, the survey included Spanish-language options, with mailed packets containing bilingual cover letters.

In addition to the survey, two focus groups were conducted with Jefferson County residents: 1) a focus group focusing on members of the Spanish-speaking community, and 2) current visitors to JCOS properties. These focus groups were used to expand on important topics from the survey and to capture more rich information in qualitative form. Summaries of these focus groups are provided in a later section. Both methodologies are extremely valuable to engage the community and gather feedback.

DATA TREATMENT & ANALYSIS

The data provided for this study undergo a series of quality assurance and quality control procedures prior to analysis. First, all paper data received are entered by hand and are checked for errors and inconsistencies during the data entry process. Each comment is also hand-entered and written as closely to verbatim as possible. Where needed, adjustments are made (e.g., recoding values) based on the team's collective experience in survey research and professional judgement.

To ensure that the results are as representative as possible at the county level, responses are compared to various demographics collected by the U.S. Census. If needed, the data is weighted to better represent the key variables found to be different from the Census. Because the sample size of this study is large, weighting was only applied to three variables: 1) respondent age, and 2) respondent income level and 3) Hispanic origin. Typical with survey research, the age profile of the Invite sample skewed slightly older than results collected by the Census. Furthermore, residents who identify as Hispanic/Latino or Spanish origin were slightly underrepresented. Finally, the income distribution of the sample was adjusted to better represent all residents. Therefore, the data was weighted to better represent the age, income and ethnic profile according to the Census for Jefferson County.

Upon final weighting, results are vetted internally by the research team. Additional analyses are conducted if necessary to ensure results are accurate and high quality. At that stage, the data is considered final and moves to the visualization stage where graphing and interpretation occur. All results for the statistically valid survey results are weighted throughout the report.

KEY FINDINGS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2024 Jefferson County Open Space (JCOS) Resident Survey provides critical insights into how residents use, perceive, and prioritize the county's open spaces. With a robust dataset, the survey captured perspectives from a statistically valid random sample of 1,678 households, complemented by an open-link survey for broader engagement. This report builds upon findings from prior survey cycles, highlighting trends, evolving priorities, and areas for improvement to guide JCOS's strategic planning and stewardship efforts.

KEY FINDINGS

High Resident Satisfaction and Usage

- Over three-quarters (78%) of respondents rated their JCOS experience as very good or excellent.
- Only 6% reported not using a JCOS park in the past 12 months, and 44% report they visit at least once a week, but it is unclear if those parks are JCOS-managed or not. Due to this possible confusion, a map of JCOS properties was included on the cover letter to help respondents identify parks. In either case, these results demonstrate the integral role parks play in residents' lives in the county.

Importance of Core Amenities

- Parking availability (average importance rating of 4.2 out of 5.0) and restrooms (4.1) ranked as the most important features for park visitors.
- Despite their importance, quality ratings for these amenities fell short, highlighting opportunities for targeted enhancements.

Preservation and Recreation Balance is Key

- Nearly half (48%) of respondents preferred an equal balance between natural resource preservation/protection and outdoor recreation in natural settings. Preservation-focused efforts received slightly stronger overall support.

Maintenance of Existing Parks is a Top Priority

- Maintenance of current parks and trails garnered the strongest support, with 91% of respondents rating it highly.
- Development of new parks (69%) and acquisition of new properties (63%) received support but ranked lower in priority.

Strong Support for Climate Resilience Initiatives

- Community priorities include improving forest and grassland health (4.3 average importance) and using native plants for restoration (4.3).
- Actions like electrifying vehicles and providing additional transportation options received less support but remain valuable long-term goals.

Park Experiences Depend on Visitor Courtesy and Compliance

- Trail courtesy (77% cite positive influence) and compliance with regulations, such as leashing dogs (68% cite positive influence), were significant factors in enhancing park experiences.

Real-Time Access Management Tools Are Preferred

- Apps to monitor parking availability (64% support) and information on alternative park options (60%) were favored over logistical solutions like off-site parking or shuttles.

Community Values Highlight Environmental Stewardship and Wellness in Open Space Benefits

- The top-rated benefits of JCOS include the preservation of scenic views (91% rated as important), maintaining a healthy environment (87%), and enhancing the overall quality of life in the county (85%). These priorities highlight strong community support for environmental stewardship and quality of life initiatives.
- Recreation and wellness opportunities (87%) and the ability to escape from urban environments (82%) are also highly valued, indicating the community's appreciation for outdoor activities and mental health benefits provided by open spaces.

Strengthened Outreach to Diverse Communities is Valued

- JCOS conducted targeted outreach to minority communities, including a focus group with Spanish-speaking residents. Participants from the Hispanic community expressed appreciation for being included and emphasized the importance of culturally relevant engagement.

JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE RESIDENT SURVEY RESULTS

This chapter covers the results from the 2024 survey.

RESULTS

The following results are from the Invite sample only (defined as the statistically valid sample collected from a random selection of Jefferson County residents). These results are the most important for decision-making as they are representative of the county as a whole. Open link results are not included in the main body of the report, but the appendix compares both the Invite and Open link results together. Open link results, while valuable, are not statistically valid.

LIVING IN JEFFERSON COUNTY

Figure 1
Location in Jefferson County
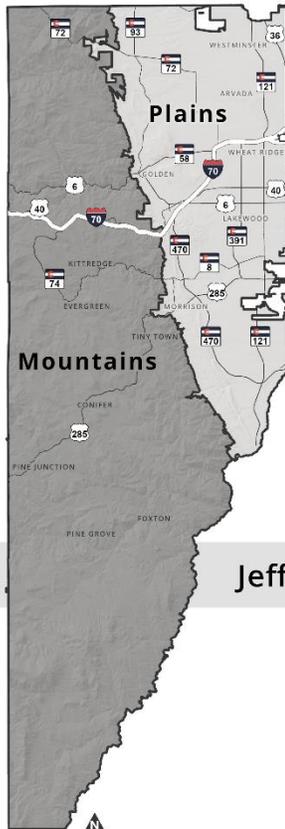
In which area do you live in Jefferson County according to the map below?

Invite

Plains	86%
Mountains	12%
Not shown on map	1%
n=	1,683

Source: RRC Associates

- Respondents were asked to identify where they lived in the county using two overarching regions defined as the "Plains" and "Mountains". Jefferson County has used these designations in other studies across the region to broadly delineate between areas of the county. Overall, for this survey sample, a greater share of responses was received from the Plains area (86%) with a smaller portion living in the Mountains (12%). Postcards and paper surveys were distributed randomly across the county. Through random selection, higher population density areas of the county received a larger share of total surveys.

**Figure 2
Frequency of Use of JCOS Parks**

In the past 12 months, how often have you visited a Jefferson County Open Space park?

Invite

About every day	11%
About once a week	33%
About once a month	26%
Once or a few times a year	24%
Never	6%
I don't know	1%
n=	1,678
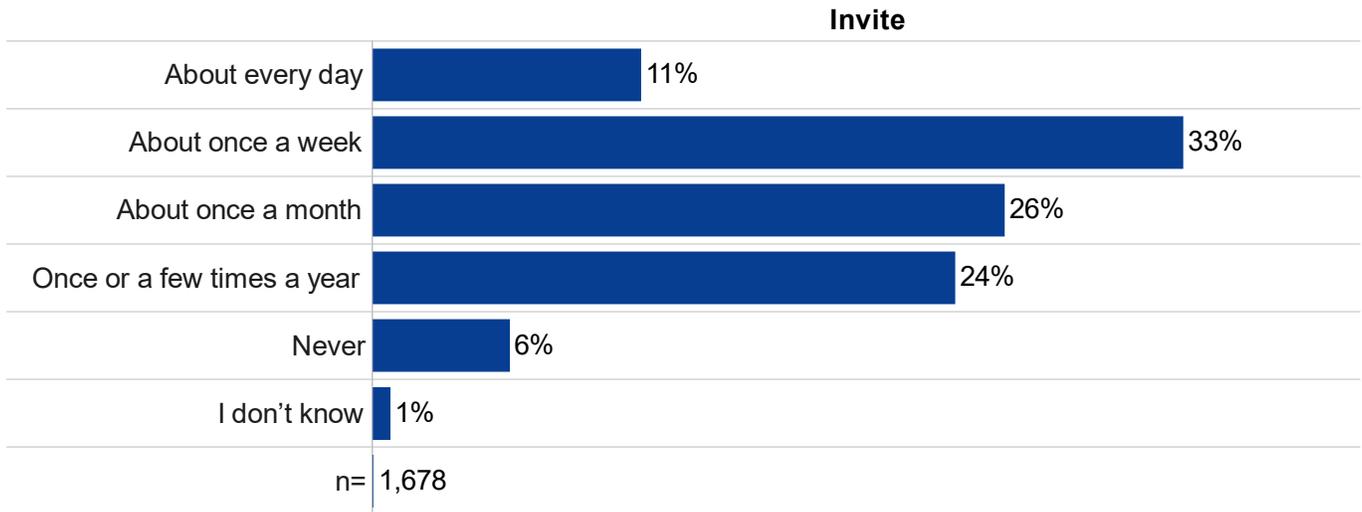
Source: RRC Associates

- Respondents are generally frequent visitors of JCOS parks with 44% reporting they visit at least once a week. A map was provided on the back of the cover letter to assist respondents with understanding which properties the county manages, however, there still may be some confusion amongst respondents regarding which locations are actually owned and maintained by JCOS. Only 6% of the sample report never visiting JCOS parks. Results suggest that most people have at least visited one location in Jefferson County over the past year.

**Figure 3
Reasons for Not Using JCOS Parks More Often**

Why don't you visit Jefferson County Open Space parks more often?

Invite

Not enough time	57%
Too many people	21%
Not aware of parks, programs, and facilities	13%
Not enough parking	10%
Too far from home	6%
Prefer other parks and locations (Which locations?):	4%
Feels unsafe	2%
Poor condition of parks and facilities/amenities	2%
No way to get there (Please specify):	2%
Don't have the programs or facilities that I want (Please specify):	1%
None of the above	11%
Other reason (Please specify):	11%
n=	1,598
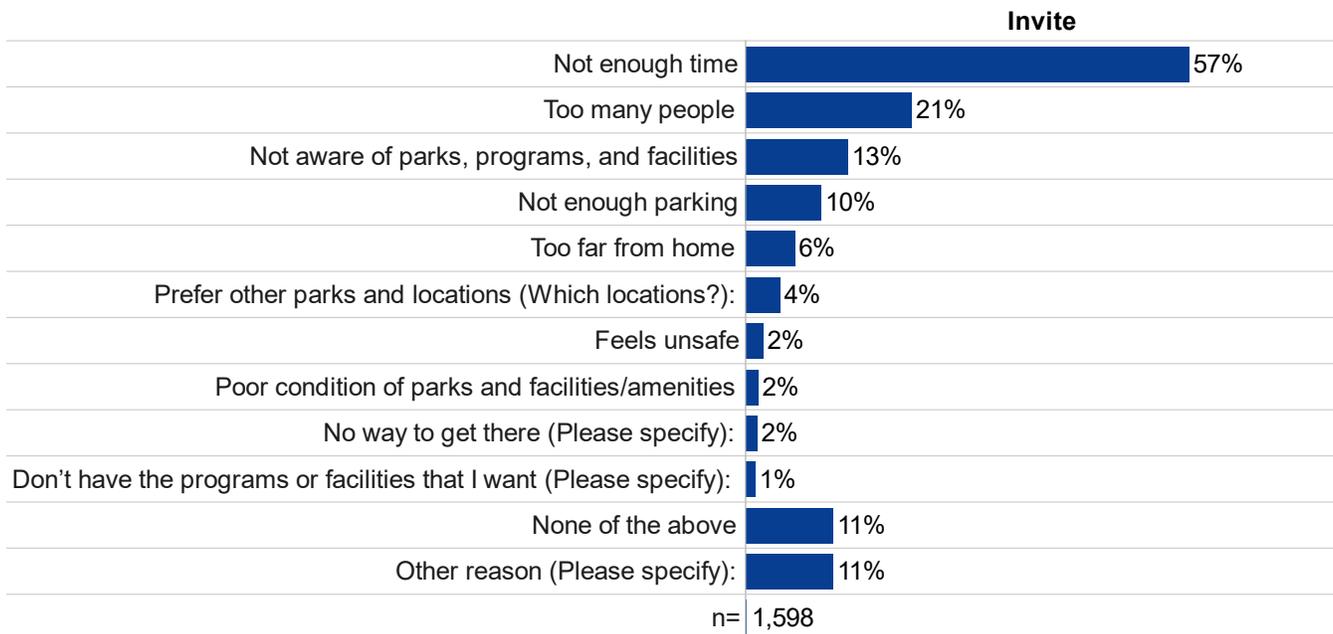
Source: RRC Associates

- Respondents were asked for barriers on why they didn't visit JCOS parks more often. Over half of respondents (57%) said lack of time was the primary reason they didn't visit more often. In addition, 21% feel that there are too many people and 13% are not aware of parks, programs, and facilities offered by JCOS. These barriers are commonly found in survey research across parks and recreation districts and not necessarily unique to JCOS.

- The "other" responses on this question tended to focus on a few key topics that were not on the survey such as physical issues and challenges participating in outdoor recreation at their age.

Figure 4
Activities in JCOS Parks

In the past 12 months, which activities have you done in Jefferson County Open Space parks?

Invite

Activity	%
Hiking/walking	84%
Enjoying scenery/wildlife viewing	61%
Being outside with my dog	35%
Cycling/mountain biking	26%
Running	22%
Picnicking	18%
Learning about nature and history	15%
Tubing/wading/swimming	11%
Fishing	9%
Camping	7%
XC skiing/snowshoeing	6%
Rock climbing	5%
Whitewater boating (rafting, kayaking)	5%
Sledding	4%
Geocaching	2%
Horseback riding	1%
Ice climbing	0.1%
Hang-gliding/paragliding	0.1%
None of the above	7%
Other (Please specify):	4%
n=	1,679
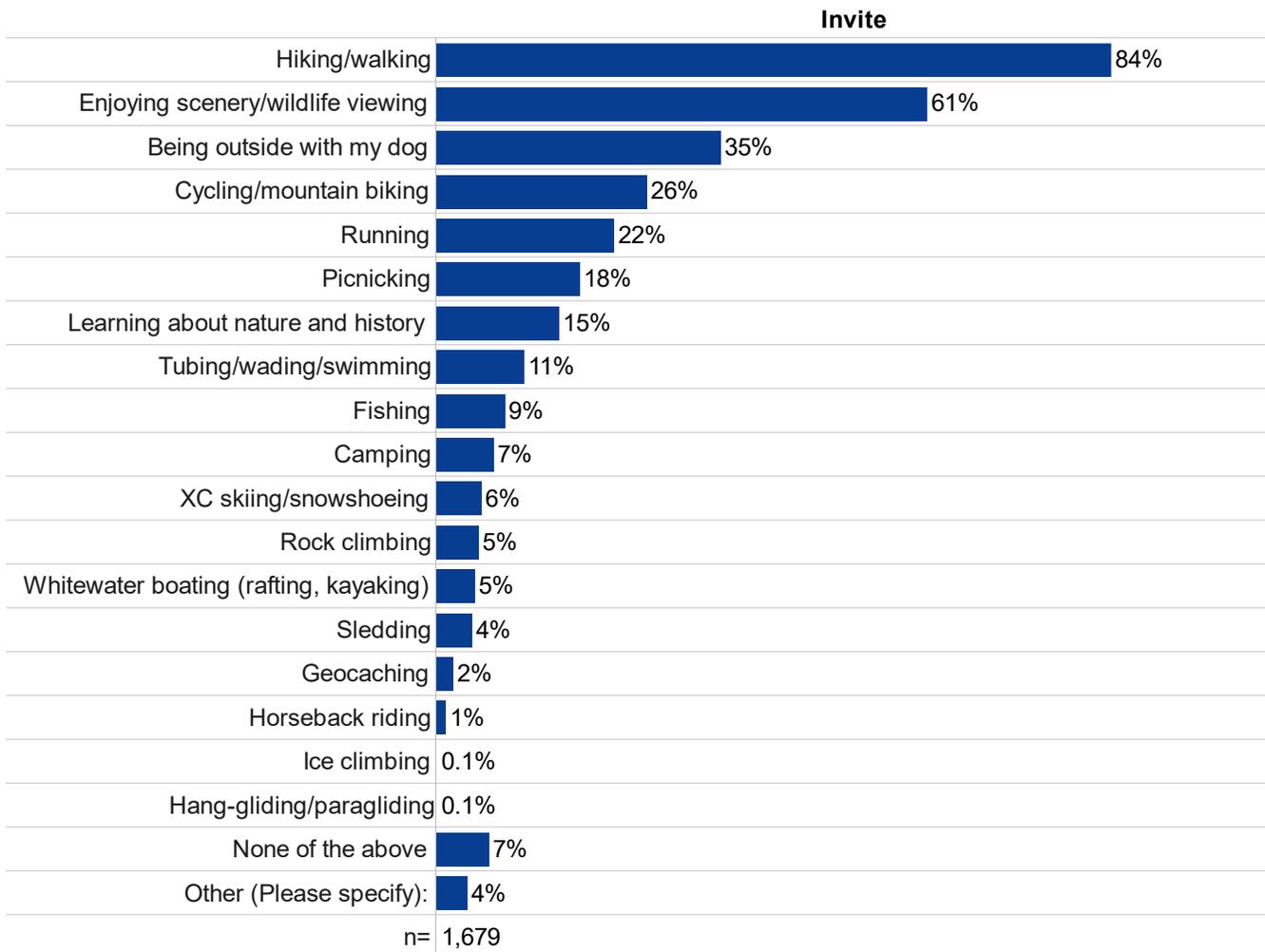
Source: RRC Associates

- Respondents participate in a variety of activities while at JCOS parks with the primary activity being hiking/walking (84%) followed by enjoying scenery/wildlife viewing (61%) and being outside with dogs (35%). Only 7% overall said they haven't participated in any of the listed activities, indicating strong participation in outdoor recreation among the public. Results from activity participation are consistent with those of other open spaces across the West, as hiking is a very common activity among residents in communities similar to Jefferson County.

Figure 5
Most Frequent Activity in JCOS Parks

Which activity of those you have done in Jefferson County Open Space parks is your most frequent activity?

Invite

Activity	Percentage
Hiking/walking	62%
Being outside with my dog	13%
Cycling/mountain biking	9%
Running	7%
Enjoying scenery/wildlife viewing	4%
Fishing	1%
Rock climbing	1%
Camping	0.4%
Picnicking	0.3%
Horseback riding	0.3%
Whitewater boating (rafting, kayaking)	0.2%
Learning about nature and history	0.2%
Tubing/wading/swimming	0.1%
Geocaching	0.1%
Other (Please specify):	3%
n=	1,097
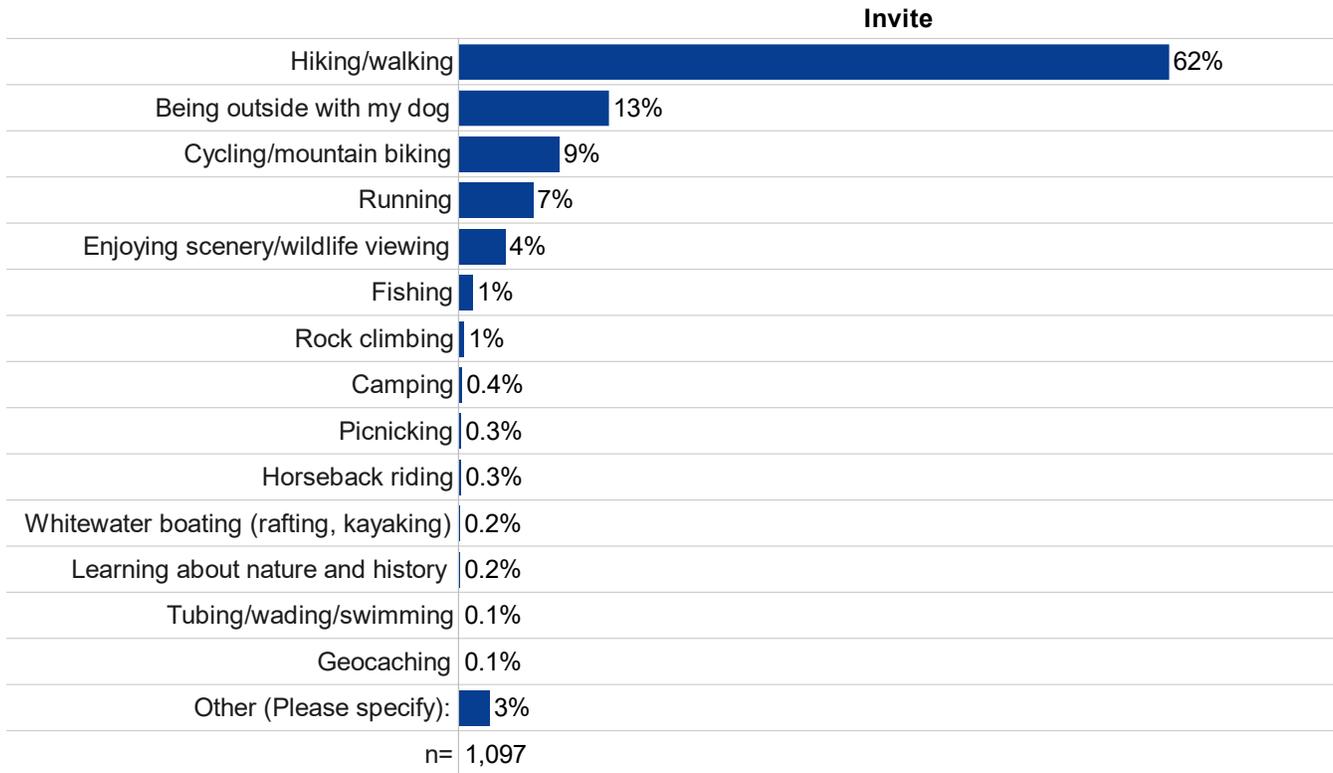
Source: RRC Associates

- Unsurprisingly, when asked to choose the one activity they most frequently participate in, 62% of respondents selected hiking/walking followed by being outside with dogs (13%) and cycling/mountain biking (9%). Activities such as fishing, climbing, camping, and more all saw primary importance to less than 1% of the population; however, these activity groups tend to be very passionate with visitor bases that have specific needs. Again, these results highlight the importance of hiking/walking to the JCOS resident population.

JEFFERSON
COUNTY COLORADO
Open Space

Figure 6
Satisfaction with Overall Experience in JCOS Parks

How would you rate your level of satisfaction with your overall experience in Jefferson County Open Space parks?

Invite

1 – Poor	1%
2 – Fair	2%
3 – Satisfactory	15%
4 – Very good	42%
5 – Excellent	36%
Don't know or N/A	5%
n=	1,673
Avg.	4.3
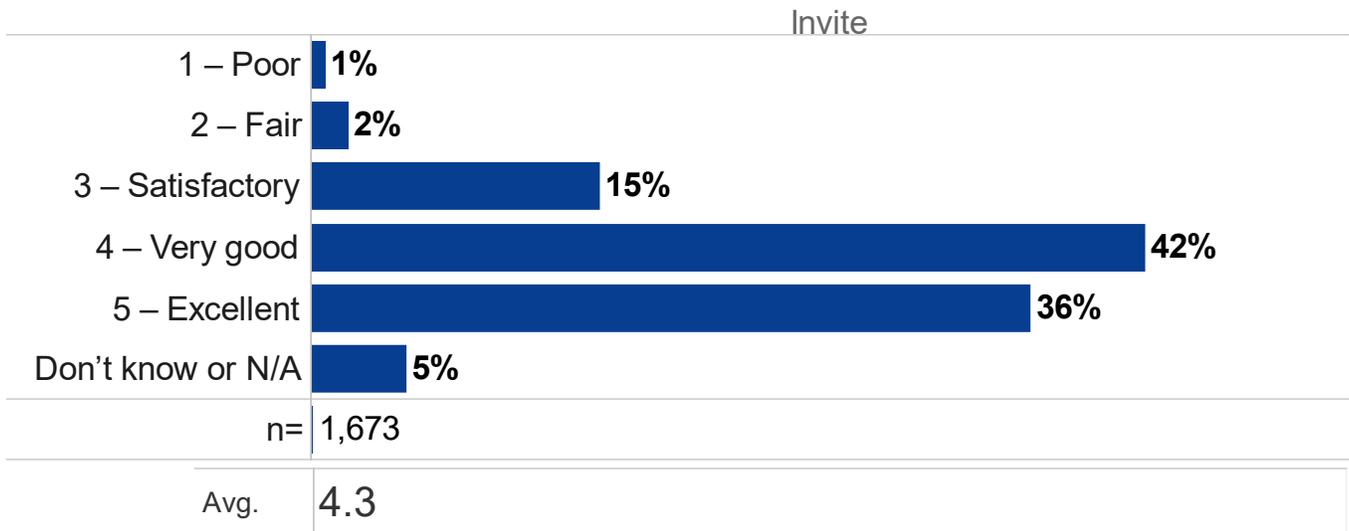
- Overall satisfaction ratings are high with over three-quarters of respondents (78%) rating their level of satisfaction as very good or excellent. For JCOS, this finding should instill fairly high confidence that the vast majority of residents are feeling positive about their park experiences. In fact, only 3% rated their experience as either "Fair" or "Poor".

Figure 7
Communication Effectiveness

Overall, how would you rate Jefferson County Open Space in providing information about parks, facilities, trails, and programs?

Invite

1 – Poor	4%
2 – Fair	15%
3 – Satisfactory	32%
4 – Very good	36%
5 – Excellent	13%
n=	1,602
Avg.	3.4
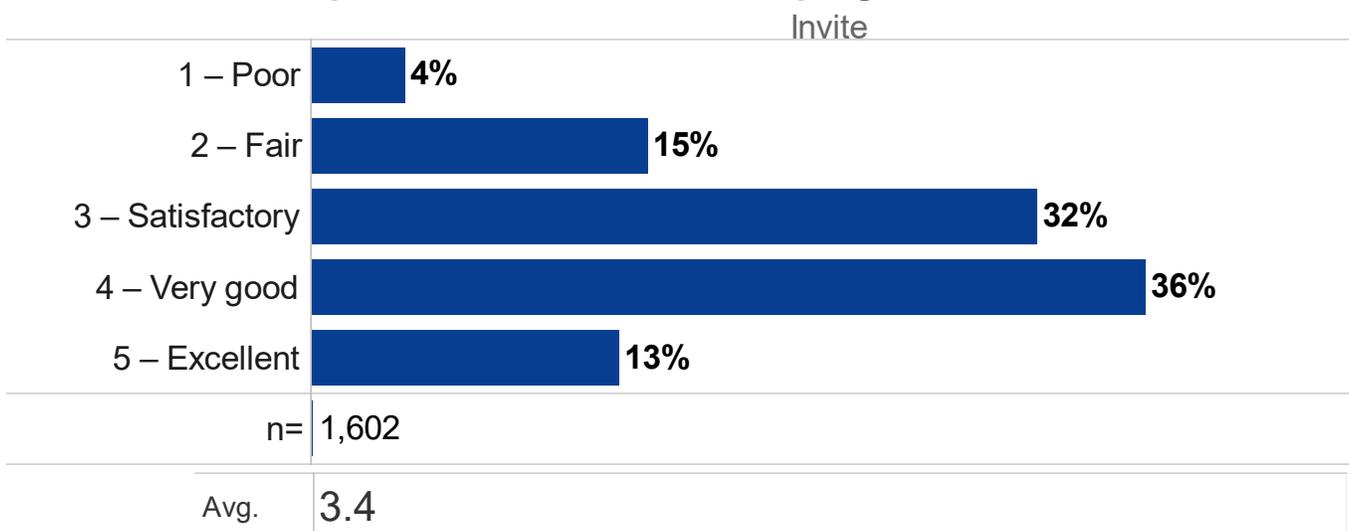
- Respondents were asked to rate how well JCOS provides information about parks, facilities, trails, and programs. The majority of respondents provided positive feedback, with 36% rating the information as "Very good" and 13% as "Excellent." Meanwhile, 32% rated it as "Satisfactory,"

RRC

indicating room for improvement in some respects. The average rating was 3.4 out of 5, suggesting generally favorable but not exceptional satisfaction levels. Information sources are typically a challenge for managers as the channels for delivering information have grown exponentially over the past decade. Consolidating information and strategically reaching out to the community is more important than ever.

Figure 8
Current Communication Methods about JCOS

What are ALL THE WAYS you learn about Jefferson County Open Space?

Invite

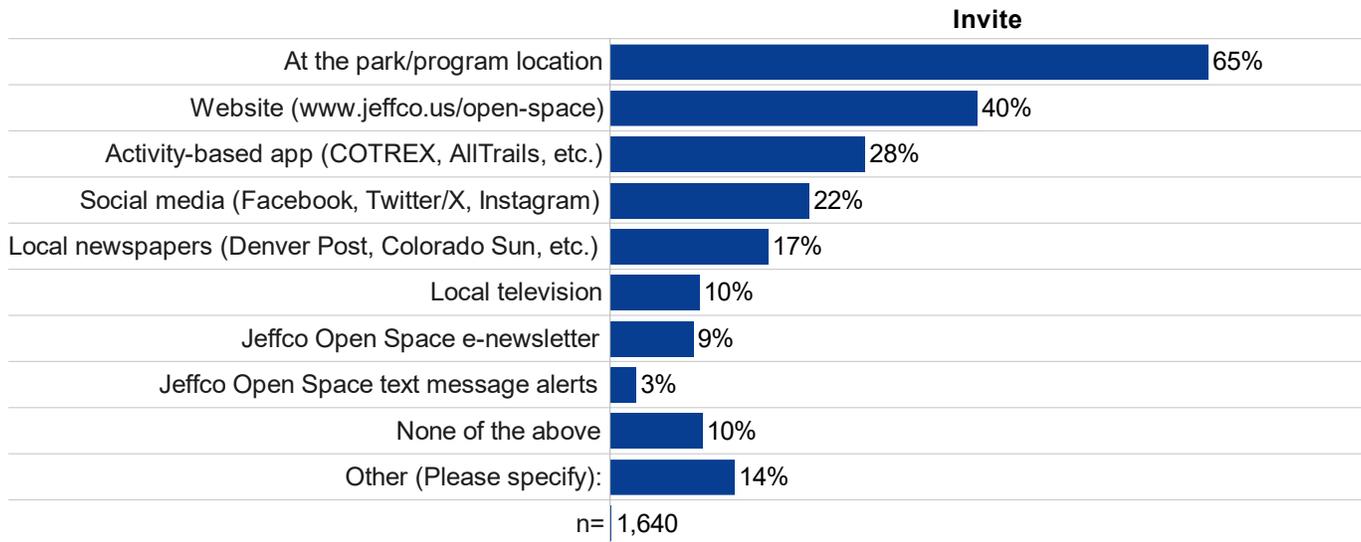|	
At the park/program location	65%
Website (www.jeffco.us/open-space)	40%
Activity-based app (COTREX, AllTrails, etc.)	28%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram)	22%
Local newspapers (Denver Post, Colorado Sun, etc.)	17%
Local television	10%
Jeffco Open Space e-newsletter	9%
Jeffco Open Space text message alerts	3%
None of the above	10%
Other (Please specify):	14%
n=	1,640

Source: RRC Associates

- The most common source of information to learn about JCOS is at the park or program location, cited by 65% of respondents. The jeffco.us/open-space website (40%) follows as the second most common, and activity-based apps like COTREX or AllTrails (28%) are the third most common. Social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter/X, and Instagram, are used by 22% of respondents, while local newspapers account for 17%. These information sources represent several different modes from online to traditional on-the-ground flyers and signage.

- Less frequently used sources include local television (10%), the JCOS e-newsletter (9%), and text message alerts (3%). Notably, 10% of respondents indicated they use none of the listed methods. The data highlights the importance of on-site communication and digital tools in disseminating information about JCOS.

- Those who responded to the "other" category typically had topics mentioned such as word of mouth from their friends, Google searches, and a variety of much more niche information sources.

Figure 9
Preferred Communication Method for JCOS

Which ONE WAY do you prefer to learn about Jefferson County Open Space?

	Invite
Website (www.jeffco.us/open-space)	25%
At the park/program location	25%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram)	13%
Activity-based app (COTREX, AllTrails, etc.)	12%
Jeffco Open Space e-newsletter	9%
Local newspapers (Denver Post, Colorado Sun, etc.)	4%
Jeffco Open Space text message alerts	3%
Local television	2%
None of the above	1%
Other (Please specify):	5%
n=	1,290
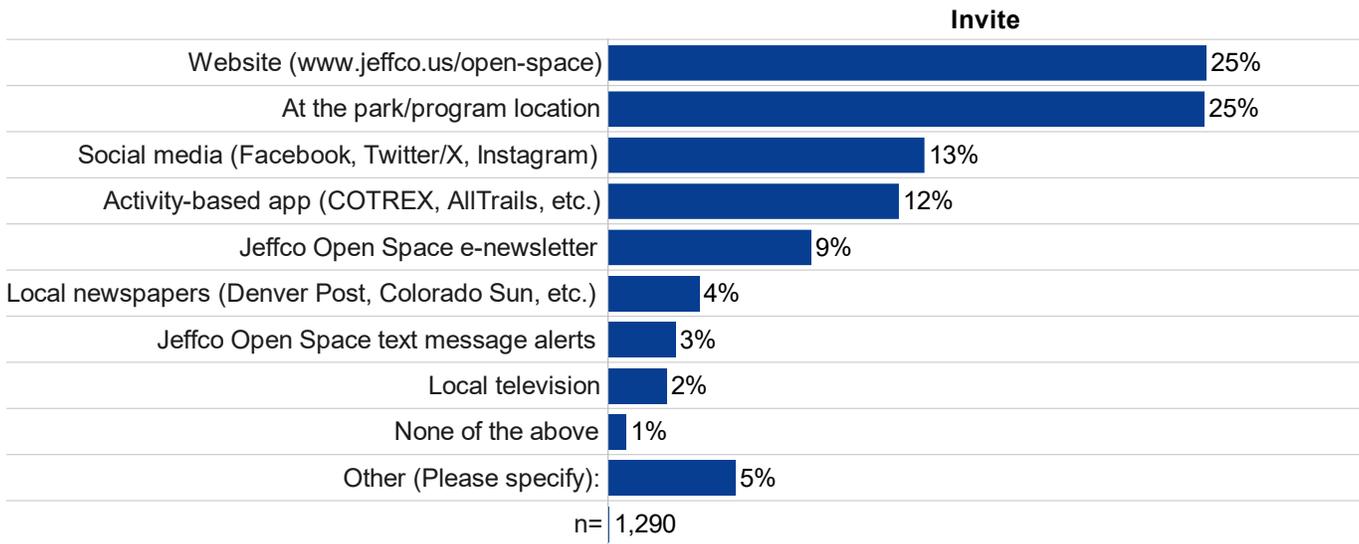
Source: RRC Associates

- From the listed communication methods, respondents were asked to select their most preferred source. This question forces the respondent to pick the most important method to receive information, allowing managers to better prioritize improvements to communication strategies more effectively. A quarter of respondents selected the JCOS website, while another quarter preferred information at the park/program location. These options were followed by social media (13%), activity-based apps (12%), and the JCOS e-newsletter (9%).

Figure 10
Importance Ratings

Please rate how important the following are to your experience when visiting Jefferson County Open Space parks.

			Percent Responding		
Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Parking availability	4.2	1,578	7%	11%	33% 48% 81%
Restrooms	4.1	1,591	7%	17%	31% 45% 76%
Multi-use natural surface (non-paved) trails (hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.)	4.0	1,556	9%	14%	36% 41% 77%
Designated use natural surface trails (e.g., hiker and equestrian-only, biker-only)	3.9	1,558	11%	20%	30% 38% 68%
Enforcement of park regulations	3.7	1,548	17%	24%	33% 60%
Signs and information kiosks	3.7	1,560	12%	25%	36% 63%
Communication of park regulations	3.6	1,559	20%	24%	31% 56%
Multi-use paved trails (hiking, biking equestrian, etc.)	3.2	1,561	31%	22%	47%
Picnic shelters	3.0	1,540	36%	30%	34%
Paper trail maps/brochures	2.9	1,552	42%	20%	38%
Park staff/volunteers on site	2.4	1,528	29% 55%	28%	17%
Oversized parking availability	2.2	1,448	53% 63%	11%	26%

Legend:
- 5 - Very important
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 - Not at all important

Source: RRC

- Respondents were asked to rate how important a variety of aspects were to their JCOS park experience on a scale where 1 = "Not at all important" to 5 = "Very important". Parking availability is rated as the most important factor for visitors to JCOS parks, with an average score of 4.2 out of 5.0 and 81% of respondents rating it as "important" (rating it a 4 or 5 out of 5). Restrooms closely follow with an average rating of 4.1, highlighted as important by 76% of respondents. These two options have been pressing topics across the Front Range as access has sometimes been challenging at busy locations during peak times. Multi-use natural surface trails, such as those for hiking, biking, and equestrian use, were also deemed significant for many, with 77% rating them as important and an average score of 4.0.

- Designated-use trails, enforcement of park regulations, and signs or kiosks scored moderately high importance, with average ratings of 3.7 to 3.9 and between 60% and 68% rating them as important. Lower importance was assigned to amenities like picnic shelters (3.0 average), paper trail maps (2.9), and park staff presence (2.4). Oversized parking availability was the least important factor, with only 26% rating it as important and an average score of 2.2. These

responses reflect visitor priorities for accessibility and fundamental amenities, while features like oversized parking and on-site staff received comparatively less emphasis.

Figure 11
Ratings of Quality of Experience in JCOS Parks

Please rate the quality of the following based on your experience when visiting Jefferson County Open Space parks.

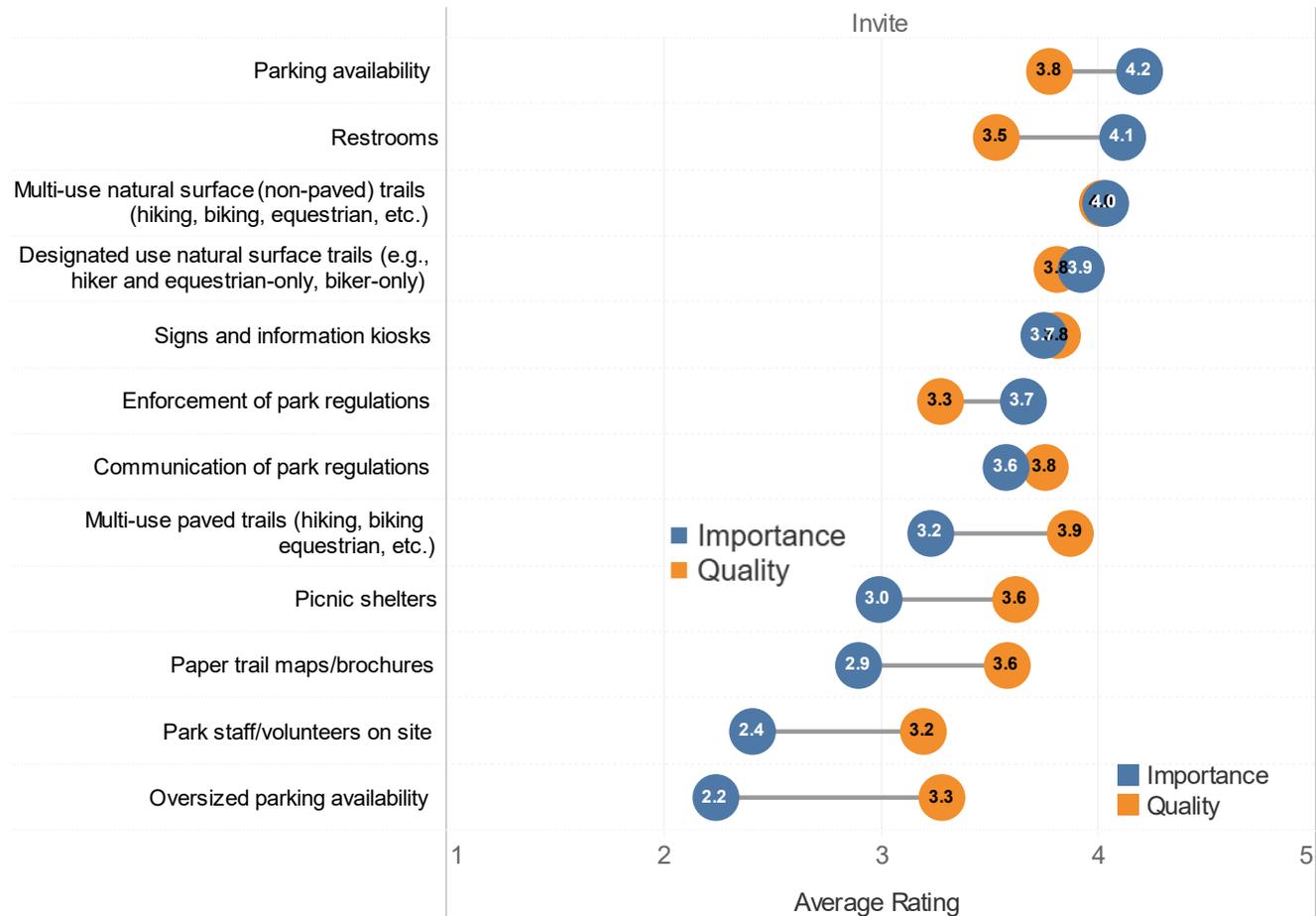| Rating Category	Avg.	n=	Percent Responding		
			1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Multi-use natural surface (non-paved) trails (hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.)	4.0	1,347	3%	23%	42% 31% 74%
Multi-use paved trails (hiking, biking equestrian, etc.)	3.9	1,269	7%	25%	39% 28% 67%
Parking availability	3.8	1,416	7%	29%	41% 63%
Communication of park regulations	3.8	1,386	7%	30%	41% 63%
Designated use natural surface trails (e.g., hiker and equestrian-only, biker-only)	3.8	1,303	6%	31%	36% 27% 62%
Signs and information kiosks	3.8	1,395	5%	30%	42% 64%
Picnic shelters	3.6	1,119	8%	40%	34% 53%
Paper trail maps/brochures	3.6	1,164	17%	28%	32% 55%
Restrooms	3.5	1,394	16%	30%	34% 53%
Enforcement of park regulations	3.3	1,224	21%	39%	27% 40%
Oversized parking availability	3.3	584	20%	39%	28% 41%
Park staff/volunteers on site	3.2	996	25%	39%	36%

Legend:
- 5 - Excellent
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1 - Poor

Source: RRC

- Respondents were then asked to rate how well the listed amenities and features are preforming in terms of quality on a scale where 1 = "Poor" to 5 = "Excellent". Multi-use natural surface trails received the highest average score of 4.0 and 74% rating them as high quality (defined as 4 or 5 out of 5). Multi-use paved trails and parking availability followed closely, receiving 67% and 63% ratings either as 4 or 5, respectively.

- Restrooms, which were quite important (average importance 4.1, with 76% of respondents rating them as important), were rated lower in quality, averaging 3.5 with only 53% giving a high-quality rating. Similarly, enforcement of park regulations and park staff/volunteers on site, which were deemed moderately important, also received lower quality ratings (averages of 3.3 and 3.2, respectively). Respondents may be expecting to see more staff/volunteers on site which could correlate to a perception of enforcement.

- Oversized parking availability was rated as one of the least important features (average importance 2.2) and similarly received a lower quality rating (3.3), indicating consistency in visitor perceptions. This is likely due to the fact that few respondents may have a need for oversized parking, but those who do may see areas for improvement in certain aspects.

Figure 12
Importance vs. Satisfaction

Differences between average importance rating and average rating of quality.

Invite

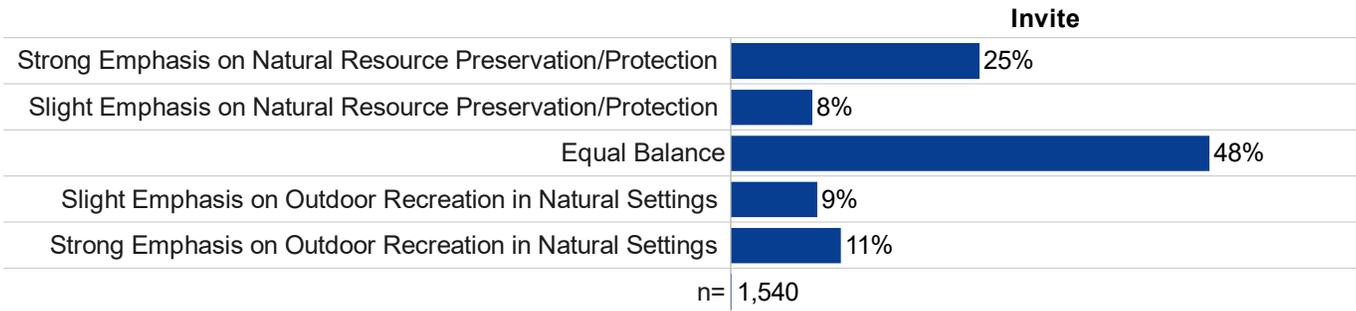| Feature	Importance	Quality
Parking availability	4.2	3.8
Restrooms	4.1	3.5
Multi-use natural surface (non-paved) trails (hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.)	4.0	4.0
Designated use natural surface trails (e.g., hiker and equestrian-only, biker-only)	3.9	3.8
Signs and information kiosks	3.7	3.8
Enforcement of park regulations	3.7	3.3
Communication of park regulations	3.6	3.8
Multi-use paved trails (hiking, biking equestrian, etc.)	3.2	3.9
Picnic shelters	3.0	3.6
Paper trail maps/brochures	2.9	3.6
Park staff/volunteers on site	2.4	3.2
Oversized parking availability	2.2	3.3

Average Rating

Source: RRC Associates

- The graph above highlights the differences in the average ratings of importance and the average ratings of quality. Key differences between ratings of importance and quality include:
  - A noticeable gap between the high importance of restrooms and their relatively lower quality rating (difference of an average of 0.6)
  - Parking availability, while rated as quite important, showed room for improvement with only 63% rating it as high quality compared to its importance of 81% (average importance rating of 4.2 compared to the average quality rating of 3.8).
  - Signs and information kiosks rated moderately high in importance (3.7) and achieved slightly better-quality ratings with an average of 3.8, indicating reasonable satisfaction.
  - Oversized parking availability and park staff/volunteers on site had much higher ratings of quality than importance overall.

Figure 13
Natural Resources Preservation/Protection vs. Outdoor Recreation in a Natural Setting

Using the scale below, please select the word choice that indicates what emphasis you would like to see Jefferson County Open Space pursue in the future: Choose the one best answer

Invite

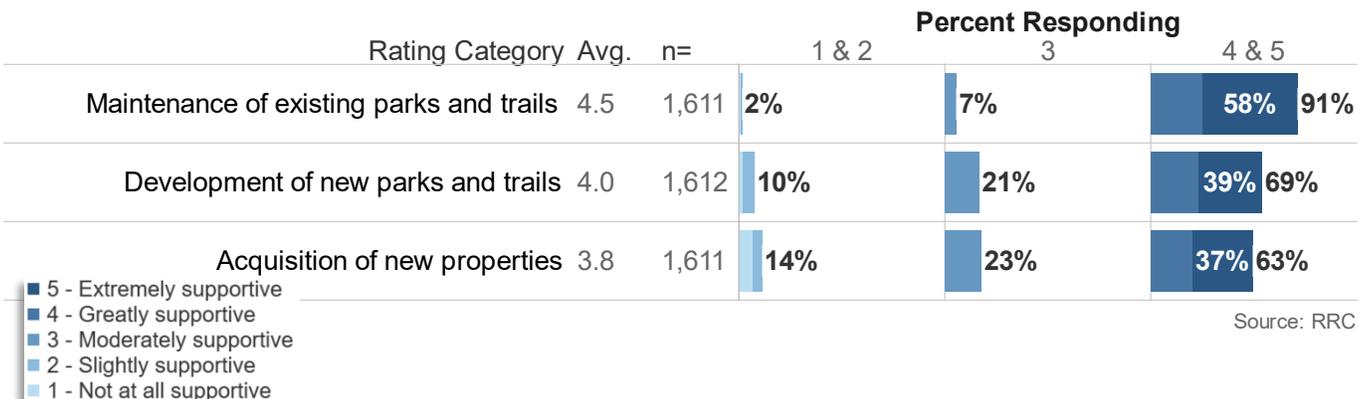|	
Strong Emphasis on Natural Resource Preservation/Protection	25%
Slight Emphasis on Natural Resource Preservation/Protection	8%
Equal Balance	48%
Slight Emphasis on Outdoor Recreation in Natural Settings	9%
Strong Emphasis on Outdoor Recreation in Natural Settings	11%
n=	1,540

Source: RRC Associates

- When asked about future priorities for JCOS, nearly half of respondents (48%) preferred an equal balance between natural resource preservation/protection and outdoor recreation in natural settings. A third (33%) preferred more emphasis on natural resource preservation/protection while 20% preferred an emphasis on outdoor recreation in natural settings. However, these results highlight a preference among many residents for balanced management approaches, with consideration for both preservation and recreational opportunities. This question has been used in other nearby open space studies which have showed similar results.

Figure 14
Level of Support for JCOS Actions

What is your level of support for each of the following focus areas of Jefferson County Open Space?

			Percent Responding		
Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Maintenance of existing parks and trails	4.5	1,611	2%	7%	58% 91%
Development of new parks and trails	4.0	1,612	10%	21%	39% 69%
Acquisition of new properties	3.8	1,611	14%	23%	37% 63%

- 5 - Extremely supportive
- 4 - Greatly supportive
- 3 - Moderately supportive
- 2 - Slightly supportive
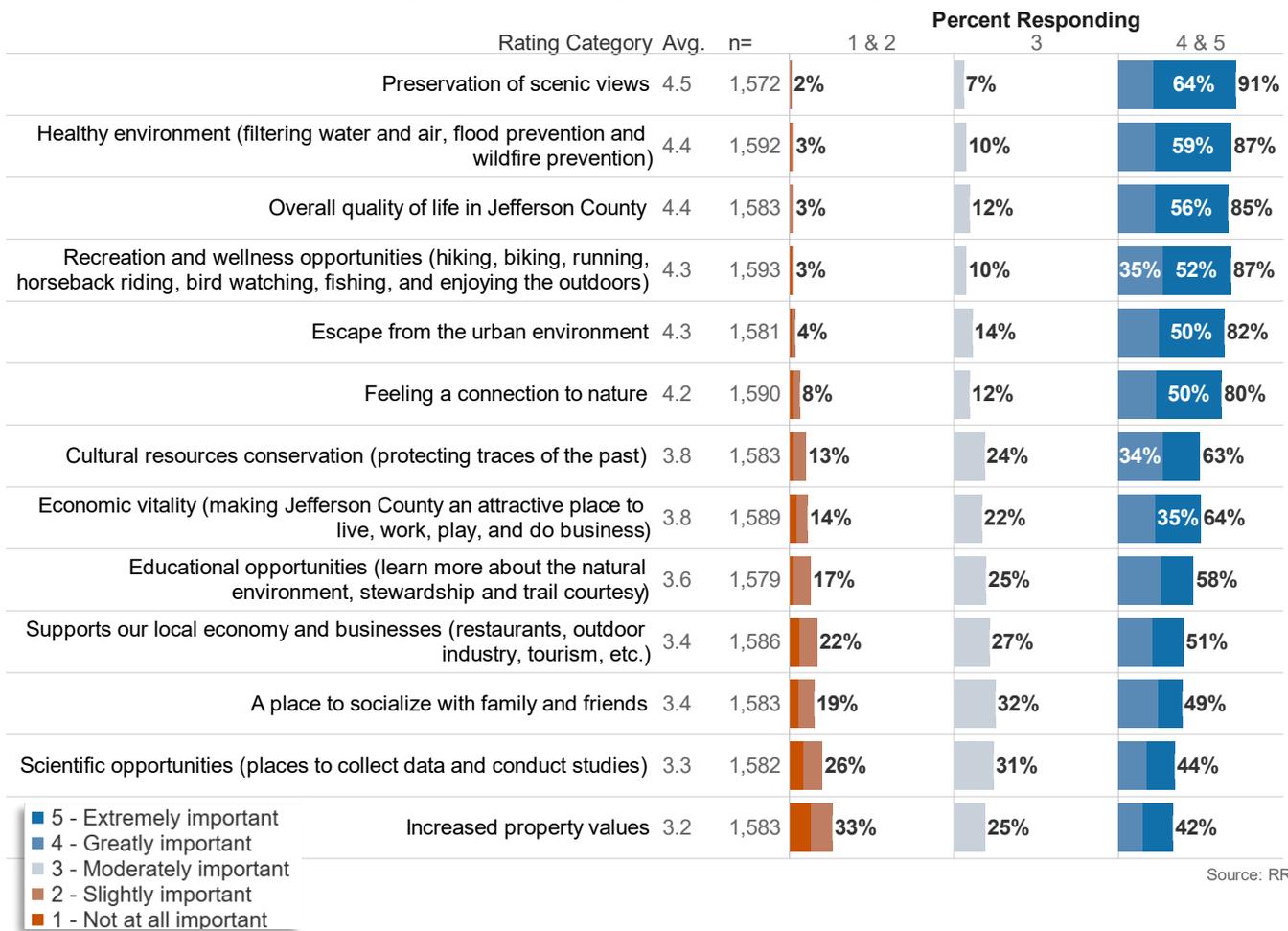- 1 - Not at all supportive

Source: RRC

- Residents rated their support for three actions by JCOS on a scale where 1 = "Not at all supportive" to 5 = "Extremely supportive". Support for JCOS priorities is highest for the maintenance of existing parks and trails, with an average rating of 4.5 and 91% of respondents expressing strong or moderate support (ratings of 4 or 5). This result indicates that residents place significant importance on preserving and maintaining current infrastructure.

- The development of new parks and trails also received strong support, with an average rating of 4.0 and 69% of respondents in favor. However, support is slightly less enthusiastic than for maintenance, as 10% rated it low (1 or 2). Support for the acquisition of new properties was comparatively lower than both other actions but still positive, with an average rating of 3.8 and

63% expressing strong or moderate support. A notable 14% rated this focus area as less important (1 or 2).

- The data underscores the support residents place on maintaining and enhancing existing amenities, while also showing support for expansion through new developments and property acquisitions, albeit to a slightly lesser extent. For JCOS managers, this confirms that all of these actions are important, but some prioritization may be feasible with deference given to maintaining current amenities.

Figure 15
Ratings of Benefits

As they relate to Jefferson County Open Space how important are the following benefits to you?

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	Percent Responding 1 & 2	3	4 & 5	
Preservation of scenic views	4.5	1,572	2%	7%	64%	91%
Healthy environment (filtering water and air, flood prevention and wildfire prevention)	4.4	1,592	3%	10%	59%	87%
Overall quality of life in Jefferson County	4.4	1,583	3%	12%	56%	85%
Recreation and wellness opportunities (hiking, biking, running, horseback riding, bird watching, fishing, and enjoying the outdoors)	4.3	1,593	3%	10%	35% 52%	87%
Escape from the urban environment	4.3	1,581	4%	14%	50%	82%
Feeling a connection to nature	4.2	1,590	8%	12%	50%	80%
Cultural resources conservation (protecting traces of the past)	3.8	1,583	13%	24%	34%	63%
Economic vitality (making Jefferson County an attractive place to live, work, play, and do business)	3.8	1,589	14%	22%	35%	64%
Educational opportunities (learn more about the natural environment, stewardship and trail courtesy)	3.6	1,579	17%	25%		58%
Supports our local economy and businesses (restaurants, outdoor industry, tourism, etc.)	3.4	1,586	22%	27%		51%
A place to socialize with family and friends	3.4	1,583	19%	32%		49%
Scientific opportunities (places to collect data and conduct studies)	3.3	1,582	26%	31%		44%
Increased property values	3.2	1,583	33%	25%		42%

- 5 - Extremely important
- 4 - Greatly important
- 3 - Moderately important
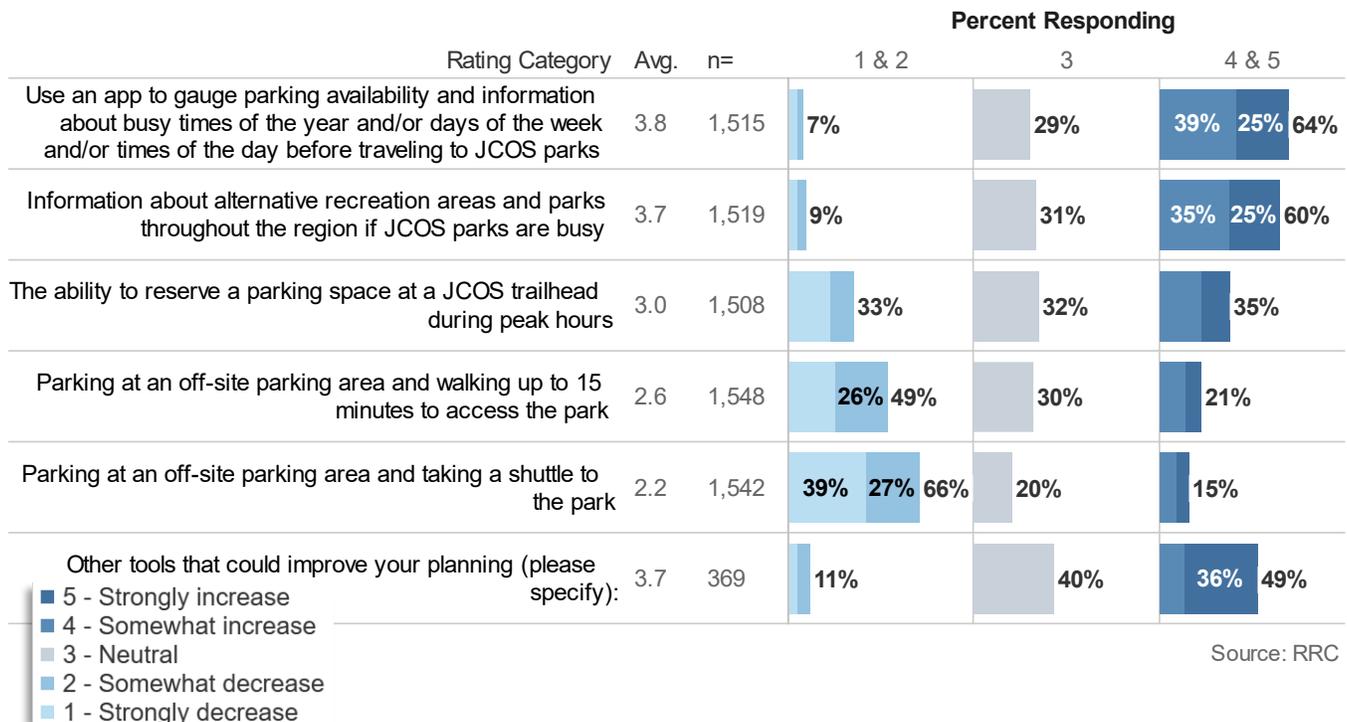- 2 - Slightly important
- 1 - Not at all important

Source: RRC

- The survey asked respondents to rate a variety of benefits from open space in terms of importance, where 1 = "Not at all important" to 5 = "Extremely important". Respondents highlighted the preservation of scenic views as the most important benefit provided by JCOS, with an average rating of 4.5 and 91% rating it as important (defined as rating either a 4 or 5 out of 5). Close behind, a healthy environment (e.g., water filtration, flood prevention, wildfire prevention) and overall quality of life in Jefferson County both received strong support, averaging 4.4 with 87% and 85% ratings of either 4 or 5 out of 5.

- Recreation and wellness opportunities and the ability to escape from the urban environment also ranked highly, with average ratings of 4.3 and 87% and 82% of respondents, respectively, rating

them as important. Additionally, feeling a connection to nature garnered significant support with an average of 4.2 and 80% rating it as important.

- Respondents place less emphasis on benefits like cultural resource conservation (3.8), economic vitality (3.8), and educational opportunities (3.6), though these were still moderately valued, with 58% to 64% rating them between a 4 or 5 overall. The lowest-ranked benefits were scientific opportunities (3.3) and increased property values (3.2), with those rating it between a 4 or 5 in importance ranging from 42% to 44%. These results indicate that respondents prioritize environmental conservation, recreation, and the intrinsic value of open spaces over more indirect or specialized benefits provided by JCOS.

Figure 16
Access Management Support at JCOS Parks

"If available and free to use, would any of the following either increase or decrease my likelihood of visiting a JCOS park?

			Percent Responding		
Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Use an app to gauge parking availability and information about busy times of the year and/or days of the week and/or times of the day before traveling to JCOS parks	3.8	1,515	7%	29%	39% 25% 64%
Information about alternative recreation areas and parks throughout the region if JCOS parks are busy	3.7	1,519	9%	31%	35% 25% 60%
The ability to reserve a parking space at a JCOS trailhead during peak hours	3.0	1,508	33%	32%	35%
Parking at an off-site parking area and walking up to 15 minutes to access the park	2.6	1,548	26% 49%	30%	21%
Parking at an off-site parking area and taking a shuttle to the park	2.2	1,542	39% 27% 66%	20%	15%
Other tools that could improve your planning (please specify):	3.7	369	11%	40%	36% 49%

- 5 - Strongly increase
- 4 - Somewhat increase
- 3 - Neutral
- 2 - Somewhat decrease
- 1 - Strongly decrease

Source: RRC

- JCOS recognizes the ongoing challenges of crowding and traffic congestion at its most popular parks and sought to gauge public support for various access management tools aimed at addressing these issues. Respondents were asked how specific tools or services, if available and free to use, would impact their likelihood of visiting a JCOS park. Notably, these services were defined as free and not leading to increased costs to residents. Systems in many other parks across the country have taken similar actions.

- The most favored solution was an app to gauge parking availability and busy times, with 64% of respondents indicating it would increase their likelihood of visiting (rating 4 or 5). Similarly, information about alternative recreation areas and parks throughout the region received strong support, with 60% of respondents expressing interest in this option.

- Respondents were split in terms of support for the ability to reserve a parking space at a trailhead during peak hours, with 35% rating this tool highly and 33% of respondents rated it as less appealing (1 or 2). Lower levels of support were noted for solutions involving off-site parking, whether combined with a walk of up to 15 minutes (21% rated it highly) or with a shuttle service to the park (15% rated it highly). These options were less popular, with many respondents likely valuing convenience and proximity to trailheads.

- These findings highlight that visitors prefer tools that provide real-time information about park conditions and alternative options over logistical solutions like off-site parking. It should be noted that a large volume of respondents are also neutral on the topic. Respondents may need more information before they make their decision whether it would impact their visitation. JCOS could prioritize the development of user-friendly apps and information systems to enhance visitor planning and reduce congestion at high-traffic parks.

Figure 17
Interaction with Others on JCOS Parks

How do the following situations influence your Jefferson County Open Space park experience?

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5	
Trail courtesy demonstrated by other visitors	4.1	1,538	8%	15%	35% 42%	77%
Friendliness and courtesy of other visitors	4.0	1,551	4%	19%	47% 31%	77%
Compliance with park regulations by other visitors (e.g., dogs on leash)	3.9	1,540	12%	20%	26% 42%	68%
Interaction with staff and volunteers	3.9	1,426	2%	37%	33% 28%	62%
Interactions with other visitors	3.1	1,554	20%	51%	25% 30%	
Presence of other visitors	3.0	1,563	24% 27%	45%	22% 27%	

- 5 - Strongly positive
- 4 - Somewhat positive
- 3 - Neutral
- 2 - Somewhat negative
- 1 - Strongly negative

Source: RRC

- Respondents were asked how various situations influence their park experience, revealing that interpersonal and compliance-related factors significantly impact satisfaction levels.

- The trail courtesy demonstrated by other visitors received the highest average rating of 4.1, with 77% of respondents stating it positively influenced their experience (ratings of 4 or 5). Similarly, the friendliness and courtesy of other visitors were also highly valued, with an average rating of 4.0 and 77% of respondents highlighting their importance.

- Compliance with park regulations by other visitors, such as keeping dogs on leashes, was rated moderately important, with an average score of 3.9 and 68% expressing that it positively impacts their experience. Interaction with staff and volunteers also scored an average of 3.9, with 62% noting its positive impact, suggesting that staff presence is appreciated but perhaps less critical than visitor behavior.

- Lower ratings were given to interactions with other visitors (average 3.1) and the presence of other visitors (average 3.0). Only 30% and 27% of respondents, respectively, rated these as having a strong positive influence on their experience, while higher neutral and negative ratings suggest crowding or unwelcome interactions may detract from enjoyment.

Figure 18
Specific JCOS Park

Do you have a specific Jefferson County Open Space park you were thinking of when answering the above questions?

Invite

No	57%
Yes (Which JCOS park?):	35%
Unsure	8%
n=	1,497

Source: RRC Associates

- To better understand if respondents were picturing a specific JCOS park when answering the above questions, the survey asked respondents to specify which park they were thinking of in those terms. Approximately 57% of respondents were not thinking of a specific park whereas 35% were. An additional 8% were unsure if they knew of a specific park or not.
- Of those that were thinking about a park, the most mentioned names were Crown Hill, Mount Falcon, and Lair o' the Bear.

Figure 19
Mitigating Climate Change

In response to climate change Jefferson County Open Space is taking action in several areas. Please rate the following actions by level of importance.

			Percent Responding		
Rating Category	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Improving forest and grassland health to support resilient ecosystems	4.3	1,565	7%	12%	29% 53% 82%
Using native seeds and plants for land restoration and preserving genetic diversity	4.3	1,563	6%	12%	30% 52% 82%
Buying land to protect wildlife, air quality, and ecosystems	4.1	1,571	10%	13%	26% 50% 77%
Educating the public on how land conservation mitigates climate change	3.6	1,562	20%	24%	27% 30% 57%
Building eco-friendly trailheads with solar power, EV chargers, and water-saving techniques	3.5	1,563	20%	25%	29% 55%
Electrifying JCOS vehicles and tools to cut pollution and improve air quality	3.3	1,563	28%	26%	46%
Providing more transportation options to parks like trails, bike lanes, shuttles, and public transit	3.3	1,545	24%	29%	47%
Other action you would like to see JCOS take:	4.1	222	7%	25%	50% 68%

Source: RRC

- 5 - Extremely important
- 4 - Greatly important
- 3 - Moderately important
- 2 - Slightly important
- 1 - Not at all important

- JCOS is actively addressing climate change through various initiatives and sought to gauge community support for these actions. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of several

strategies aimed at mitigating climate impacts and promoting environmental resilience. Some of these actions are currently being conducted at JCOS parks while others are still in discussions or long-term planning.

- The most strongly supported actions included improving forest and grassland health and using native seeds and plants for land restoration, both with an average importance rating of 4.3 and 82% of respondents rating them as highly important (4 or 5). These results underscore the community's recognition of ecosystem health as a key priority.

- Buying land to protect wildlife, air quality, and ecosystems also received significant support, with an average rating of 4.1 and 77% identifying it as important. Moderate levels of support were shown for educating the public on land conservation's role in mitigating climate change (average 3.6, 57% rating it highly) and building eco-friendly trailheads with sustainable technologies (average 3.5, 55% rating it highly). However, initiatives such as electrifying JCOS vehicles (average 3.3, 46% rating it highly) and providing more transportation options (average 3.3, 47% rating it highly) were seen as relatively lower priorities.

- These findings suggest that JCOS should continue focusing on ecosystem restoration and land protection while also exploring community-driven suggestions for climate action. Expanding outreach and education efforts could further engage the public in JCOS's climate initiatives, ensuring alignment with community priorities.

Figure 20
Additional Comments and Suggestions Word Cloud
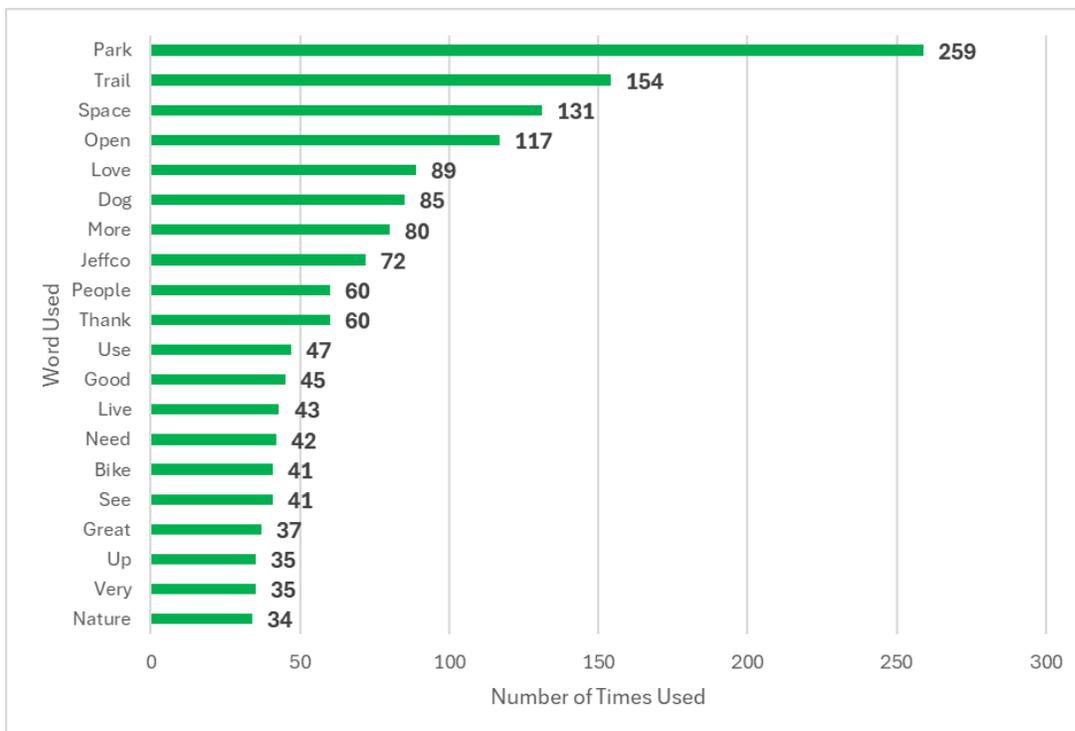
At the end of the survey, respondents were given a chance to provide any additional comments and suggestions for JCOS. A total of 470 comments were collected from the statistically valid sample and a summary of the comments as well as a bar chart of the most citied words is shown above.

In addition, the most common themes from the open-ended comments include:

Positive Feedback

- Many respondents expressed gratitude and appreciation for the well-maintained parks, trails, and facilities.
- The proximity of parks to urban areas and their accessibility were praised.
- Rangers and staff were frequently commended for their helpfulness and professionalism.
- Several comments highlighted the importance of preserving open space and maintaining biodiversity.

Concerns and Suggestions

1. **Dog-Related Issues**:
   o Off-leash dogs and failure to pick up dog waste were among the top complaints.
   o Many called for stricter enforcement of leash laws and penalties for non-compliance.
   o Suggestions included additional signage, waste bags, and trash receptacles.

2. **Crowding and Overuse**:
   o Overcrowding at popular parks was frequently noted, leading to issues with parking and trail congestion.
   o Suggestions included creating additional parks, spreading usage through better visitor information, and expanding parking facilities.

3. **Trail Etiquette and Multi-Use Conflicts**:
   o Concerns were raised about fast-moving bicycles, lack of trail courtesy, and conflicts between hikers, bikers, and horseback riders.
   o Recommendations included more educational initiatives on trail etiquette, designated use trails, and better enforcement of regulations.

4. **Facilities and Infrastructure**:
   o Clean and accessible restrooms were emphasized as a high priority.
   o Additional shaded areas, seating, and picnic shelters were suggested, especially for families and older visitors.
   o Improved trail signage and real-time parking availability updates were proposed.

5. **Environmental Preservation**:
   o Many comments stressed the importance of balancing recreation with conservation.
   o Suggestions included avoiding overdevelopment, limiting tree removal for fire mitigation, and prioritizing wildlife habitat protection.

6. **Inclusivity and Accessibility**:
   o Better accessibility for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and families with strollers was requested.
   o Suggestions included designated wheelchair-accessible trails and more inclusive programming.

7. Off-Leash Dog Programs:
   ○ Several comments proposed adopting an off-leash dog program similar to Boulder County's "voice and sight" program.

Unique Ideas and Additional Suggestions

- Implementing visitor education through volunteer educators at park entrances.
- Expanding programming that connects nature with art or family activities.
- Exploring partnerships for land acquisition to protect open spaces from development.
- Allowing limited collection of natural resources (e.g., antlers, rocks) under regulated conditions.

This feedback highlights both the community's appreciation for JCOS and areas where improvements could enhance visitor experiences while protecting natural resources.

Figure 21
Gender

Are you…?

Invite

Male	52%
Female	47%
I prefer to identify as:	1%
n=	1,580

Source: RRC Associates

- Demographically, respondents were fairly balanced in gender with approximately 52% identifying as male and 47% female. Because of the weighting scheme, demographics can be impacted the most among questions in the sample.

Figure 22
Income

Which category best describes your household income?

Invite

Less than $50,000	20%
$50,000 to less than $75,000	14%
$75,000 to less than $100,000	12%
$100,000 to less than $150,000	21%
$150,000 or more	33%
n=	1,511
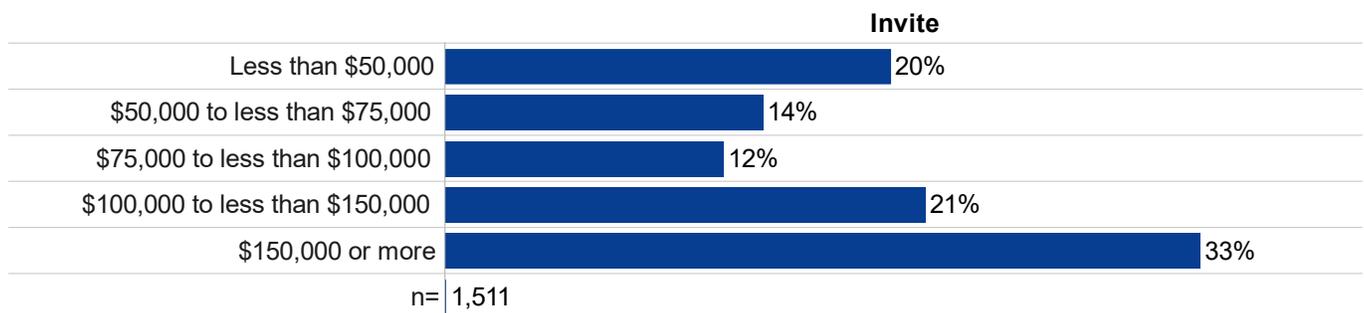
Source: RRC Associates

- Household income varies across respondents with 33% earning $150,00 or more, 21% earning between $100-$149,999, and 20% earning less than $50,000. This variable was weighted to match the U.S. Census data for the county.

**Figure 23
Age**

Age of respondent

Invite

Age	Percent
18 - 24	17%
25 - 34	13%
35 - 44	18%
45 - 54	16%
55 - 64	18%
65 - 74	3%
75 and older	14%

n=	1,533
Avg.	47.0
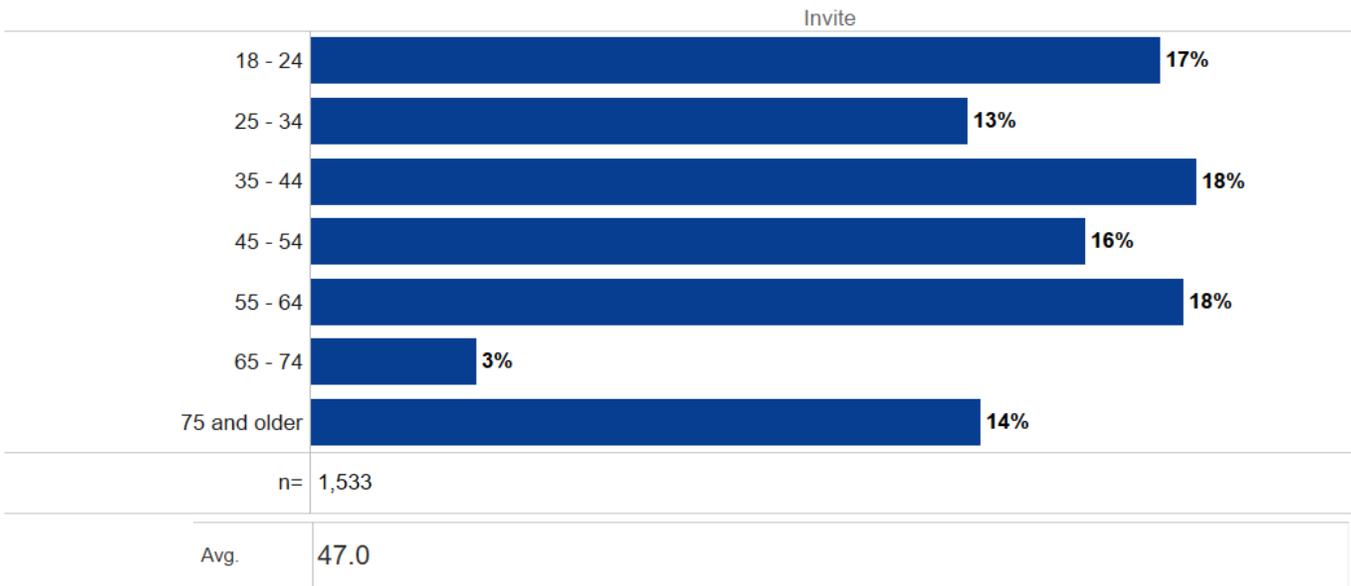
Source: RRC Associates

- Data was weighted to match the U.S. Census distribution of age groups in Jefferson County with an average age of 47.

**Figure 24
Years in Jefferson County**

How many years have you lived in Jefferson County?

Invite

Years	Percent
Less than 1 year	1%
1 - 5 years	32%
6 - 10 years	13%
11 - 20 years	16%
More than 20 years	38%

n=	1,563
Avg.	19.5
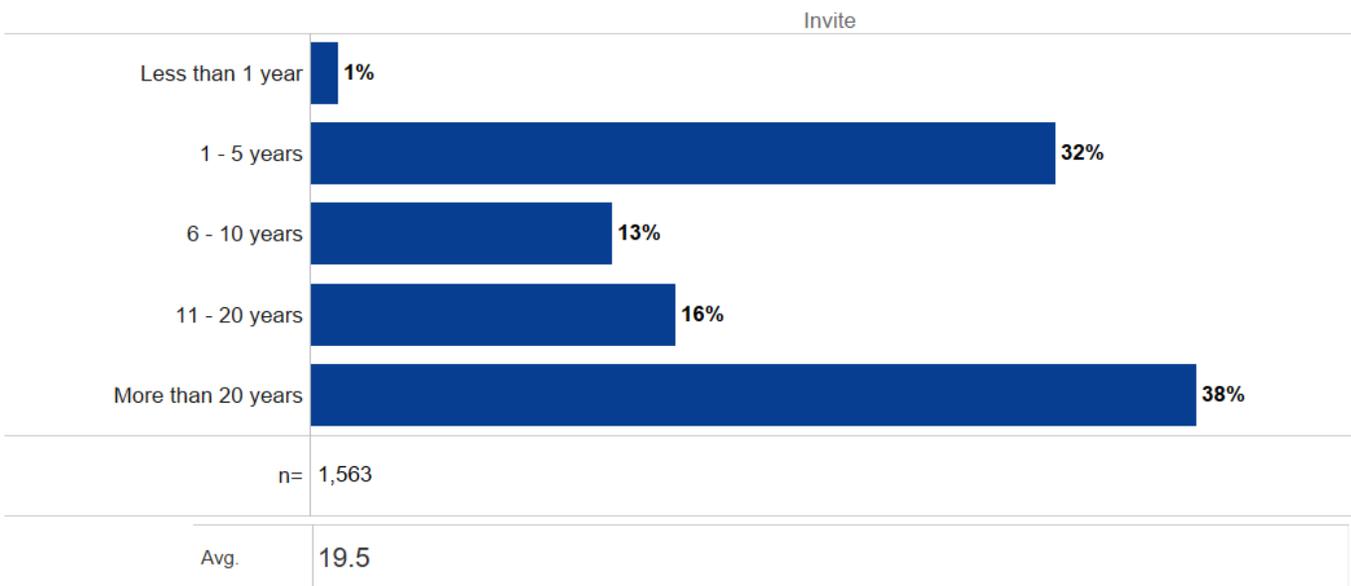
Source: RRC Associates

- Both newer residents and long-term residents responded to the survey with a third having lived in the County for less than a year to five years and 38% who have lived in Jefferson County for more than 20 years. The average length of time over all is 19.5 years.

Figure 25
Household Makeup

Which of these categories best applies to your household?

Invite

Category	
Couple, no children	24%
Couple with children at home	23%
Single, no children	19%
Couple, children no longer at home (empty nester)	17%
Multi-generational household (grandparents, parents, children)	7%
Single, children no longer at home (empty nester)	7%
Single with children at home	4%
n=	1,575
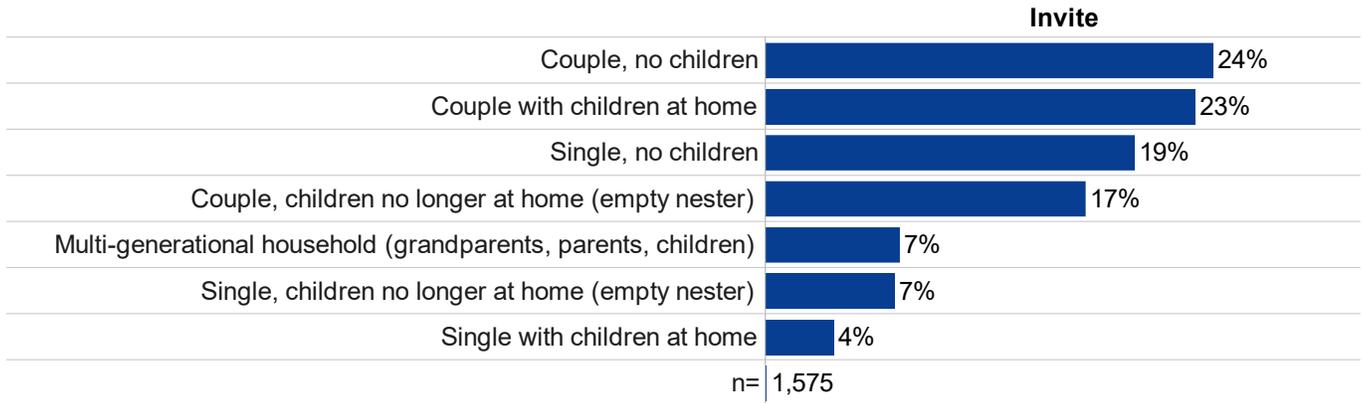
Source: RRC Associates

- For household type, the largest share of respondents were couples with no children (24%), followed closely by couples with children at home (23%). Those who are single without children came third (19%), with couples who have children that do not live at home as the fourth option (17%).

Figure 26
Hispanic Origin

Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin?

Invite

No	85%
Yes	15%
n=	1,541
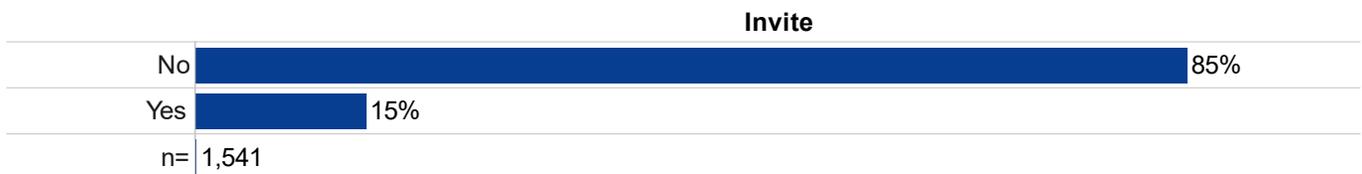
Source: RRC Associates

- Another variable weighted by U.S. Census data, approximately 15% of the sample identified as Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin.

Figure 27
Race

What race do you consider yourself to be?

Invite

White/Caucasian	90%
American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native American	5%
Black/African American	4%
Asian	2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%
Other	8%
n=	1,544
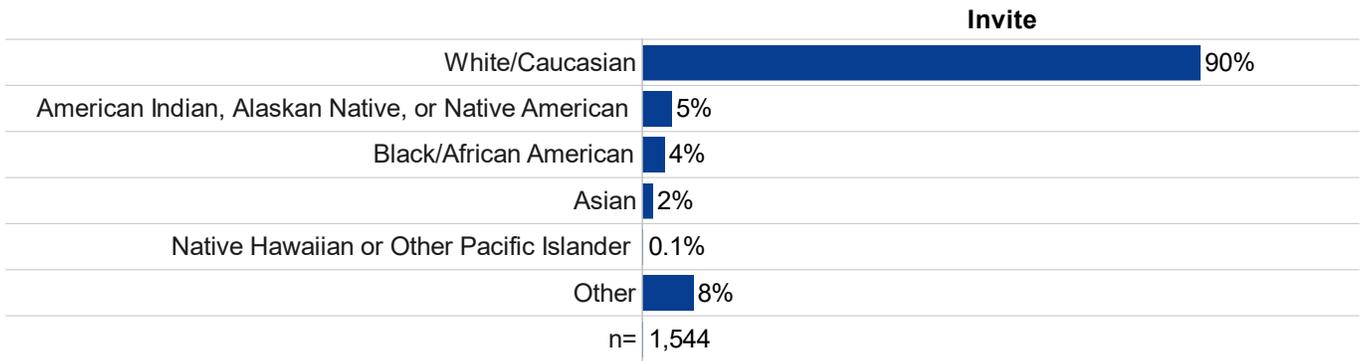
Source: RRC Associates

- The final demographic variable was racial identity. Among the sample, 90% of respondents identify as White/Caucasian with 5% identifying as American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native American, and 4% as Black/African American. Approximately 8% identify as a race/ethnicity not included on the list, which was mirrored after the general Census categories.

FOCUS GROUPS SUMMARY

This chapter covers highlights the two focus group sessions which supplement the findings in the statistically valid survey data.

FOCUS GROUPS

To enhance the understanding of community needs and experiences, two focus groups were conducted as part of the 2024 Jefferson County Open Space Resident Survey. These discussions provided detailed qualitative insights into the unique challenges, preferences, and priorities of residents regarding open space use and accessibility. Focus groups are a way to gain qualitative feedback on topics relevant to the survey but with much more context and richness. The focus groups were structured to gain insight from two unique audiences: 1) those part of the Spanish-speaking community, and 2) a mix of visitors of JCOS parks. Below is a summary of both focus groups from the 2024 JCOS Resident Survey.

1) THEMES FROM FOCUS GROUP #1 (SPANISH-SPEAKING PARTICIPANTS)

The first focus group was held on November 7, 2024, with 13 Spanish-speaking participants. An interpreter facilitated the session, allowing participants to communicate freely in their preferred language. The interpreter translated the discussion on-site through in-ear devices, allowing everyone to participate in their preferred language. This session emphasized the barriers faced by the Spanish-speaking community and the need for culturally sensitive engagement.

1. **Language and Communication Barriers at JCOS Sites and Broader:**
   - Participants emphasized the significant language obstacles they face when accessing park services and information. Many noted that public resources, including flyers and park signage, are predominantly in English, limiting engagement for non-English speakers. The lack of Spanish-speaking staff exacerbates this challenge, as exemplified by instances where community members needed to rely on custodial staff for translation at county offices. This went beyond JCOS and was an issue that was brought up across the county as a whole. In fact, many topics from this session applied across Jefferson County.
   - Furthermore, respondents felt that it wasn't enough to just have signage/information at parks in Spanish. They wanted to be able to speak with someone fluent in their language and those who know their audience. This was an important topic for all participants in the focus group.

2. **Cultural Relevance and Inclusion:**
   - Attendees discussed how parks and recreation activities often feel tailored to English-speaking, non-Hispanic communities. There is a perceived lack of culturally inclusive programming and outreach that resonates with the Spanish-speaking community's traditions and practices, such as family-oriented outings and communal activities. Improvements have been made at certain levels, but there needs to be a more concerted effort with funding to back it.

3. **Awareness and Accessibility:**
   - The group highlighted ineffective outreach strategies, noting that even when translated materials are created, they are often not distributed through channels that reach Hispanic residents. Effective communication should include outreach through community centers, local Spanish-language social groups, and trusted networks.

4. **Perception of Community Prioritization:**
   - A recurring sentiment was that Hispanic community needs are often overlooked by park managers. Despite living in Jefferson County for many years, participants felt that efforts to include them in park-related activities were insufficient. This perception reinforces a sense

of exclusion and suggests a need for more intentional and sustained efforts to involve diverse community members. For instance, they wished more events would cater to the ways they use parks rather than the typical non-Hispanic community.

Suggestions for Improvement:

1. Increased Spanish-Language Support:

   o Employing bilingual staff and using translation tools to bridge communication gaps across the county. In addition, information should be offered in Spanish where possible on-site.

2. Targeted Marketing:

   o Utilizing Spanish-language media such as radio, TV, and community social media platforms to disseminate information about events and services. Furthermore, working with local Hispanic groups (e.g., Lakewood Latinos, among others) to better involve these communities where they discuss important topics.

3. Cultural Programming:

   o Incorporating culturally relevant events and activities that invite Hispanic residents to engage in the natural spaces of Jefferson County.

4. Community Integration:

   o Establishing stronger connections between park staff and Hispanic community leaders to foster trust and participation.

The focus group underscored the importance of viewing parks not just as recreational areas, but as spaces for building community and improving mental health. Enhanced inclusivity measures could create a more welcoming environment for the Hispanic population in Jefferson County, ultimately benefiting the entire community.

2) <u>THEMES FROM FOCUS GROUP #2 (GENERAL PARTICIPANTS)</u>

The second focus group took place on November 12, 2024, with six participants, including one individual with accessibility needs. This discussion centered on physical accessibility and infrastructure, as well as ways to foster inclusivity for individuals with mobility challenges. This session, while smaller, was meant to better understand specific issues visitors of JCOS sites may have, possible improvements to these challenges moving into the future, and areas they see as successful as well.

1. **Physical Accessibility Challenges**:

   o Participants noted several physical accessibility challenges, emphasizing the need for ADA-compliant infrastructure, including wheelchair-accessible trails, restrooms, and parking spaces. They pointed to uneven trails, narrow bridges, and insufficient amenities as specific examples requiring attention. This was mainly tied to those who utilize these features, but it has become an important topic among open space management across the region in recent years.

2. **Parking and Transportation Issues**:

   o Parking and transportation were also highlighted as issues, with parking difficulties at crowded parks being a common complaint. Suggestions included reserved parking spaces, better signage, and shuttle services, provided the shuttles are accessible for individuals with mobility challenges.

3. **Signage and Information Challenges**:

   o A lack of clear signage and information was frequently mentioned. Participants recommended improving maps and resources to clearly identify park entrances, accessible trails, and nearby alternatives. While managers may assume that most people are able to access this information, the general public may not be as keen to immediately understand and recognize park signage.

4. **Community Engagement**:

   o Community engagement was another focus, with participants encouraging JCOS to involve residents in park improvements through volunteer days and open discussions about accessibility needs. They also suggested developing a JCOS app to provide real-time updates on parking, trail conditions, and accessible amenities.

5. **Safety and Maintenance**:

   o Safety and maintenance concerns included poorly maintained trails and inadequate lighting in some areas. For the most part, JCOS was seen as a fairly well-kept system, but there may have been some confusion between the types of parks and who manages them. Participants recommended regular upkeep and stronger oversight to improve safety for all visitors.

FOCUS GROUP CONCLUSIONS

The focus groups highlighted the importance of ensuring that JCOS parks and open spaces are accessible, inclusive, and welcoming to all residents, particularly those from underserved communities. Key areas of improvement include increasing multilingual resources and hiring bilingual staff to better serve non-English speakers, particularly Spanish-speaking residents. Participants emphasized the need for family-oriented and culturally relevant programming to foster greater community engagement and connection to nature. Infrastructure improvements, such as ADA-compliant amenities and enhanced trail maintenance, were identified as essential for improving physical accessibility. Additionally, stricter enforcement of park regulations and expanded safety measures were viewed as critical to creating a secure and enjoyable environment for visitors. Finally, participants urged JCOS to leverage diverse communication channels, including community-specific media and organizations, to promote parks and programs effectively. By addressing these needs, JCOS can better serve its diverse population and strengthen its role as a vital resource for the community.

CONCLUSIONS

Jefferson County Open Space manages a large, wide-ranging group of parks, properties, and experiences for residents and visitors alike. From expansive mountain sites to urban-proximate high-use areas, the variety of needs across the system continues to grow. With growing demand from the Front Range in recent years, a higher priority has been placed on managing and monitoring the ways JCOS parks have been used. Some of these topics were touched on throughout the 2024 Resident Survey while others are still topics to explore further.

Overall, JCOS parks are highly visited, well-regarded sites, with a large portion of residents using at least one of their locations in the year. The Colorado Front Range is one of the most active regions for outdoor recreation in the country, making many of the sites that JCOS manages an important part of many residents' lives. Overall, JCOS is meeting the needs of most visitors, with 78% of residents rating their satisfaction as a 4 or 5 out of 5, a very positive result. However, there are some areas to examine further which are discussed in the following highlights of the study:

1)   JCOS parks have a high level of satisfaction and use.

As highlighted throughout the results, JCOS is perceived positively when it comes to overall management and the visitor experience. Respondents reported high satisfaction with overall experiences and generally were supportive of JCOS across most categories. Some areas could be improved, which is always the case with public sites and agencies; however, residents frequently use JCOS parks throughout the year. In fact, only 6% said they never used a JCOS park in the past 12 months, indicating a wide array of residents using parks. These results further emphasize the need for engaged and in-depth management of sites in the Front Range as these community amenities receive heavy utilization from many residents.

2)   Parking, restrooms, and natural surface trails see high importance ratings for residents.

Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, parking, restrooms, and multi-use natural surface trails are seen as the most important offerings provided to residents. This combination may appear unique as one is tied to access, another for facilities, and the last for outdoor recreation, but they complete the experience for residents. These amenities are what receive the highest use from the most residents and are seen as important to the JCOS experience.

3)   Oversized parking availability, park staff/volunteers on site, paper trail maps/brochures, picnic shelters, and multi-use paved trail quality outweighs their importance by a large margin. Parking and restrooms see importance rise over quality the most.

When asked to rate both the importance and the quality of the feature, interesting results are found when compared against each other. Oversized parking availability, park staff/volunteers on site, paper trail maps/brochures, picnic shelters, and multi-use paved trails see the largest difference in importance and quality where quality is higher than importance.

On the opposite end, parking availability and restrooms are seen as very important, but their quality is lower than their level of importance on average. Generally, these are areas where improvements could be made to better meet the high level of importance that visitors place on the amenity. Both topics rising to the top are not surprising as they have been areas that JCOS has looked to improve over time. The results confirm JCOS should continue prioritizing these aspects moving forward.

4)   Residents prefer an equal balance of natural resource preservation/protection and outdoor recreation in natural settings.

In a question asked in each iteration of the JCOS Resident Survey, respondents continue to highlight the importance of balancing both preservation and outdoor recreation. While there are passionate groups on both sides, almost half continue to say an equal balance is needed. There is a slight lean towards more natural resource protection and preservation if respondents chose a side, however. In other nearby communities, similar results have been found with some changes over time. Overall, an equal balance has consistently remained the preference among respondents despite some slight shifts.

5)   Although most major actions are supported, residents place a higher degree of support on the maintenance of existing parks and trails compared to the development of new parks or the acquisition of new properties.

Maintenance is an important topic for current residents in Jefferson County. Current support leans more towards taking care of what is existing instead of development, getting strong support from over 90% of residents. That said, residents still have a high degree of support for all actions. The challenge for JCOS is to balance the different kinds of actions as best as possible. Residents still have an expectation for some new development while keeping a very high level of maintenance at current parks.

6)   Trail courtesy and compliance with park regulations is important to support a positive experience.

Residents appreciate when others practice courtesy on the trails and comply with park regulations. For park managers, this should stress the importance of trying to best educate and enforce regulations as they have a significant impact on their experience. On the other side, the presence of other visitors and interactions with those visitors are likely to have a more negative effect on their experience. While it's not clear if respondents have had a negative experience, they are more likely to believe their experience will be not positive with interactions.

7)   Access management strategies have a mixed response based on the type of tool proposed.

An app to gauge parking availability and use patterns and information about other nearby parks are really the only two tools that see a majority of support from residents. The ability to reserve a spot is mixed, but there may be a variety of questions about how a system like that would be enforced and implemented across sites. Parking at an off-site location with up to a 15-minute walk and a required shuttle are among the tools least supported. However, these tools have been successful in specific situations and parks across the western U.S.

8)   Climate change actions are widely supported among residents in Jefferson County.

Across the board, all climate change actions, had higher than 50% of respondents rating their importance either a 4 or 5 out of 5.0, except for electrifying JCOS vehicles and tools, and providing more transportation options. This result indicates a large proportion of residents who see these actions as moderately to extremely important. There was not a single action that was seen as overwhelmingly not important to residents. For JCOS, climate change mitigations should be seen as a positive move by most residents.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of this study and the collective experience of the research teams, a series of recommendations was formed for JCOS. However, the recommendations are meant to be suggestions and not binding as a variety of factors need to be considered when making changes across a park system.

1) <u>Maintain High Standards and Build on Positive Perceptions from Jefferson County Residents</u>
   - **Continue to engage with the community**: Public outreach will continue to reinforce positive perceptions of JCOS parks and assist staff in responding to ongoing feedback that address emerging concerns.
   - **Recognize and celebrate successes**: Share satisfaction statistics (e.g., 78% rating their JCOS experience highly) in reports and public communications to build community pride and continued support.

2) <u>Prioritize Key Improvements</u>
   - **Enhance parking and restroom facilities**: Allocate resources to improve these amenities, which are highly important to respondents and are seen by residents as needing improvement.
   - **Address trail maintenance**: Focus on maintaining and improving multi-use natural surface trails, as these are among the most important amenities for residents.
   - **Balance quality with importance when possible**: While oversized parking and multi-use paved trails are less critical to residents, ensure their high quality is preserved to avoid future dissatisfaction.

3) <u>Continue to Balance Natural Resource Preservation with Recreation</u>
   - **Adopt a dual-focus strategy**: Ensure resource allocation reflects the community's preference for an equal balance between preservation and recreation. This balance could be a central theme in JCOS's strategic planning and communication efforts.
   - **Educate stakeholders**: Share how JCOS's efforts are simultaneously protecting natural resources and enhancing recreational opportunities to build consensus among passionate subgroups.

4) <u>Focus on Maintenance and Care</u>
   - **Invest in existing infrastructure**: Prioritize maintaining current parks and trails at high standards to align with the 90%+ resident support for maintenance efforts. The County should also share their work to communicate what has been put into making their sites great.
   - **Consider development and acquisition but keep priorities intact**: Although maintenance is prioritized higher, residents in outdoor recreation-focused communities tend to always be looking for additional options through park and trail development. Those in Jefferson County still do place an importance on this aspect.

5) <u>Encourage Trail Courtesy and Regulation Compliance</u>
   - **Expand education campaigns**: Continue to develop programs and signage that emphasize trail courtesy, compliance with park regulations, and their impact on visitor experiences. Positive interactions with visitors are key to having a satisfied visitor experience.

- **Enhance enforcement presence**: Increase the visibility of park staff or volunteers to support education and enforcement of regulations, ensuring positive visitor interactions.

6) <u>Explore Specific Strategic Access Management If Needed</u>
- **Implement practical tools when possible**: If feasible, JCOS could explore visitor-friendly technologies, like an app for parking availability or real-time updates on nearby park options, as these tools have higher support among residents. However, these tools can be a large investment and involve significant amount of planning.

- **Communicate new access strategies clearly which are being considering**: JCOS will need to provide detailed explanations for any new access strategies, especially if they involve reservations or off-site parking, to build understanding and support. This communication is especially important if lower community support is received for actions under consideration.

7) <u>Lead on Climate Action</u>
- **Prioritize supported climate actions**: JCOS should focus on highly supported actions to align with community values, such as habitat restoration and sustainability initiatives.

- **Engage residents in climate efforts**: Share how JCOS's climate strategies contribute to broader environmental goals to enhance transparency and grow community buy-in.

- **Build long-term goals**: While electrification and transportation options are less supported, consider their inclusion as part of a gradual, long-term sustainability plan.

8) <u>Continue to Gather Insights</u>
- **Address gaps in knowledge**: JCOS should explore areas that were not covered in the 2024 survey, such as detailed assessments of perceptions on specific parks that may have high use challenges.

- **Benchmark against peers**: Compare JCOS survey results with other Front Range communities to identify emerging trends and best practices for managing high-use park systems.

By focusing on these recommendations, JCOS can strengthen its ability to meet community needs, enhance visitor experiences, and preserve its parks for future generations.

APPENDIX – A: INVITE VS. OPEN LINK RESULTS

This section of the report presents a comparison of the two data sets: the statistically valid "Invite" responses and the Open link responses.

In addition to the random sample survey, an Open link version was made available online to ensure all interested residents had an opportunity to participate. This survey was promoted through JCOS communication channels, including newsletters, social media, and the county website. To maintain the integrity of the statistically valid data, responses from the Open link survey were analyzed separately.

The Open link survey garnered 1,415 responses, primarily from frequent visitors who are well-acquainted with JCOS parks, trails, programs, and services. This sample included a larger proportion of cyclists and individuals with a focus on active outdoor recreation. While the Open link data skews toward these frequent visitors, it provides valuable insights into their unique needs and preferences, complementing the statistically valid survey results.

**Figure 28
Location in Jefferson County**

In which area do you live in Jefferson County according to the map below?

	Invite	Open
Plains	86%	68%
Mountains	12%	20%
Not shown on map	1%	0.4%
I do not live in Jefferson County		11%
n=	1,683	1,415

Source: RRC

**Figure 29
Frequency of Use of JCOS Parks**

In the past 12 months, how often have you visited a Jefferson County Open Space park?

	Invite	Open
About every day	11%	25%
About once a week	33%	49%
About once a month	26%	19%
Once or a few times a year	24%	6%
Never	6%	0.1%
I don't know	1%	
n=	1,678	1,340

Source: RRC

Figure 30
Reason for Not Using JCOS Parks More Often

Why don't you visit Jefferson County Open Space parks more often?

	Invite	Open
Not enough time	57%	49%
Too many people	21%	30%
Not aware of parks, programs, and facilities	13%	2%
Not enough parking	10%	9%
Too far from home	6%	5%
Prefer other parks and locations (Which locations?):	4%	8%
Feels unsafe	2%	1%
Poor condition of parks and facilities/amenities	2%	2%
No way to get there (Please specify):	2%	1%
Don't have the programs or facilities that I want (Please specify):	1%	5%
None of the above	11%	13%
Other reason (Please specify):	11%	13%
n=	1,598	1,261

Source: RRC

Figure 31
Activities in JCOS Parks

In the past 12 months, which activities have you done in Jefferson County Open Space parks?

Activity	Invite	Open
Hiking/walking	84%	84%
Enjoying scenery/wildlife viewing	61%	52%
Cycling/mountain biking	26%	62%
Being outside with my dog	35%	39%
Running	22%	25%
Picnicking	18%	10%
Learning about nature and history	15%	12%
Tubing/wading/swimming	11%	9%
Fishing	9%	8%
Rock climbing	5%	10%
Camping	7%	7%
XC skiing/snowshoeing	6%	8%
Sledding	4%	5%
Whitewater boating (rafting, kayaking)	5%	4%
Horseback riding	1%	6%
Geocaching	2%	2%
Ice climbing	0.1%	1%
Hang-gliding/paragliding	0.1%	0.1%
Other (Please specify):	4%	4%
None of the above	7%	0.1%
n=	1,679	1,334

Source: RRC

Figure 32
Most Frequent Activity in JCOS Parks

Which activity of those you have done in Jefferson County Open Space parks is your most frequent activity?

	Invite	Open
Hiking/walking	62%	32%
Being outside with my dog	13%	5%
Cycling/mountain biking	9%	47%
Running	7%	8%
Enjoying scenery/wildlife viewing	4%	2%
Fishing	1%	0.3%
Rock climbing	1%	1%
Camping	0.4%	0.1%
Picnicking	0.3%	
Horseback riding	0.3%	4%
Whitewater boating (rafting, kayaking)	0.2%	0.3%
Learning about nature and history	0.2%	0.4%
Tubing/wading/swimming	0.1%	0.1%
Geocaching	0.1%	
Hang-gliding/paragliding		0.1%
Other (Please specify):	3%	1%
n=	1,097	1,200
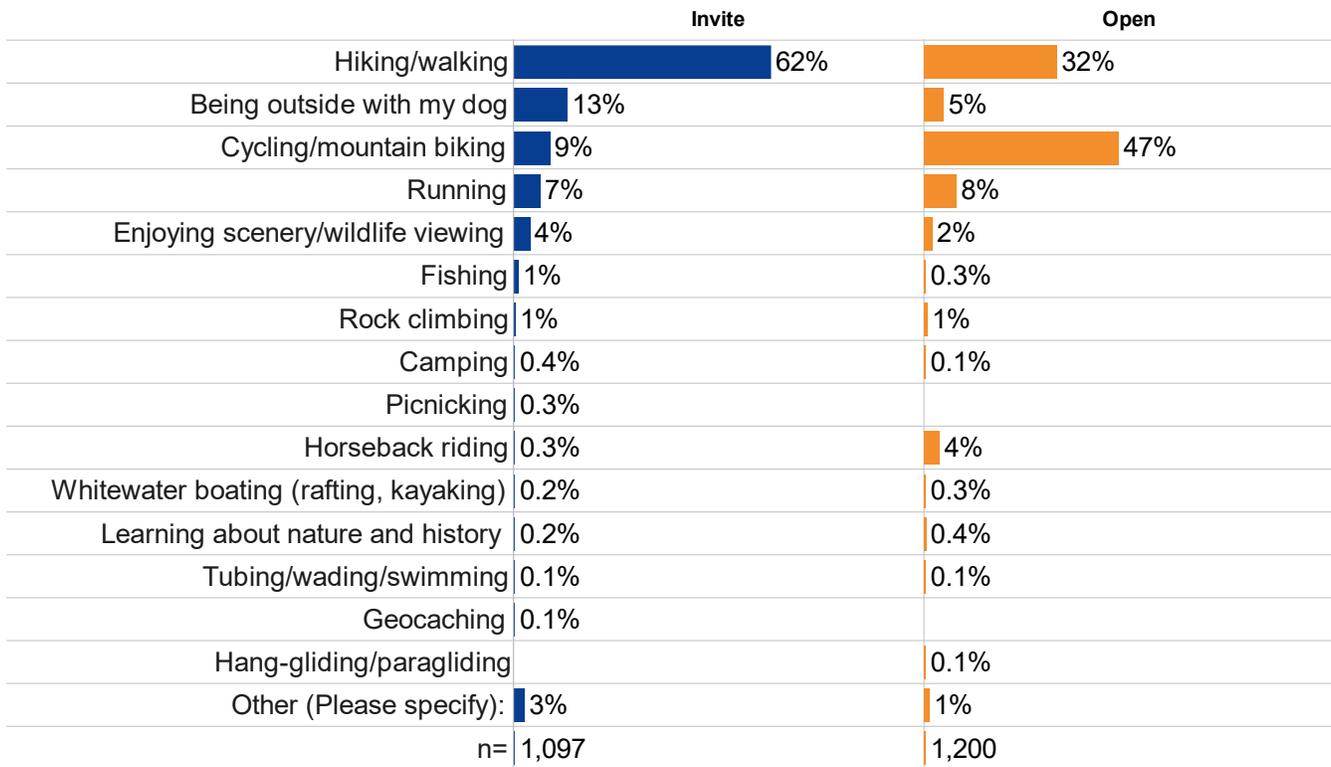
Source: RRC

Figure 33
Satisfaction with Overall Experience in JCOS Parks

How would you rate your level of satisfaction with your overall experience in Jefferson County Open Space parks

	Invite	Open
1 – Poor	1%	2%
2 – Fair	2%	6%
3 – Satisfactory	15%	19%
4 – Very good	42%	44%
5 – Excellent	36%	30%
Don't know or N/A	5%	0.1%
n=	1,673	1,305
Avg.	4.3	3.9
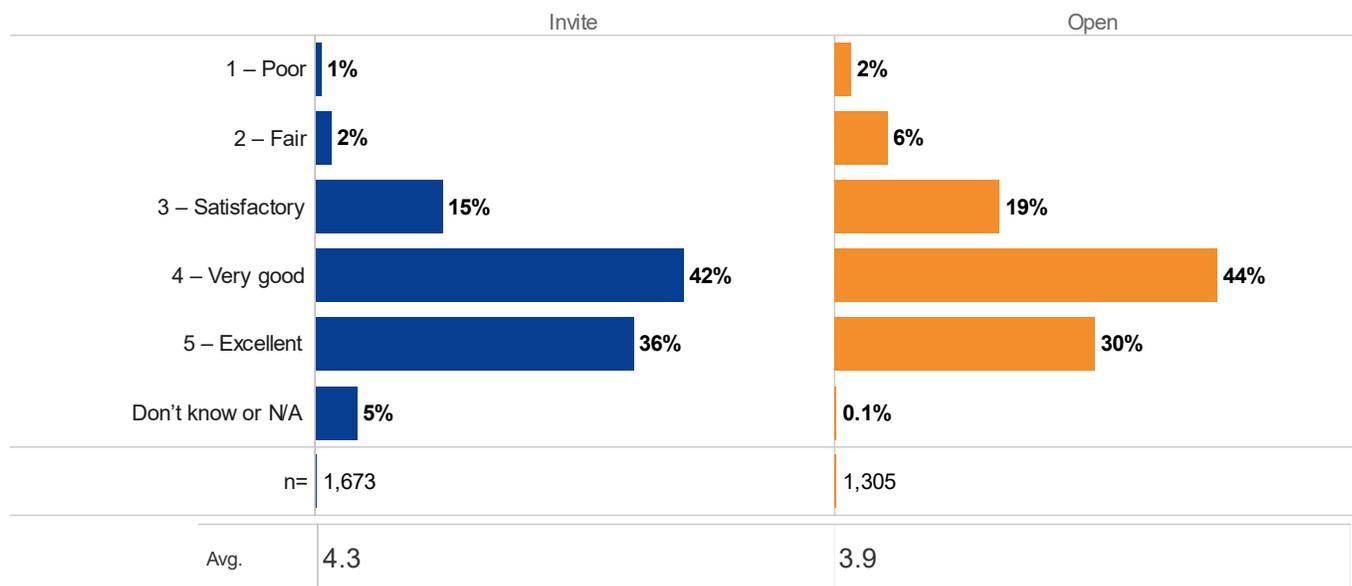
Source: RRC

Figure 34
Communication Effectiveness

Overall, how would you rate Jefferson County Open Space in providing information about parks, facilities, trails, and programs?

	Invite	Open
1 – Poor	4%	2%
2 – Fair	15%	9%
3 – Satisfactory	32%	31%
4 – Very good	36%	39%
5 – Excellent	13%	19%
n=	1,602	1,202
Avg.	3.4	3.6
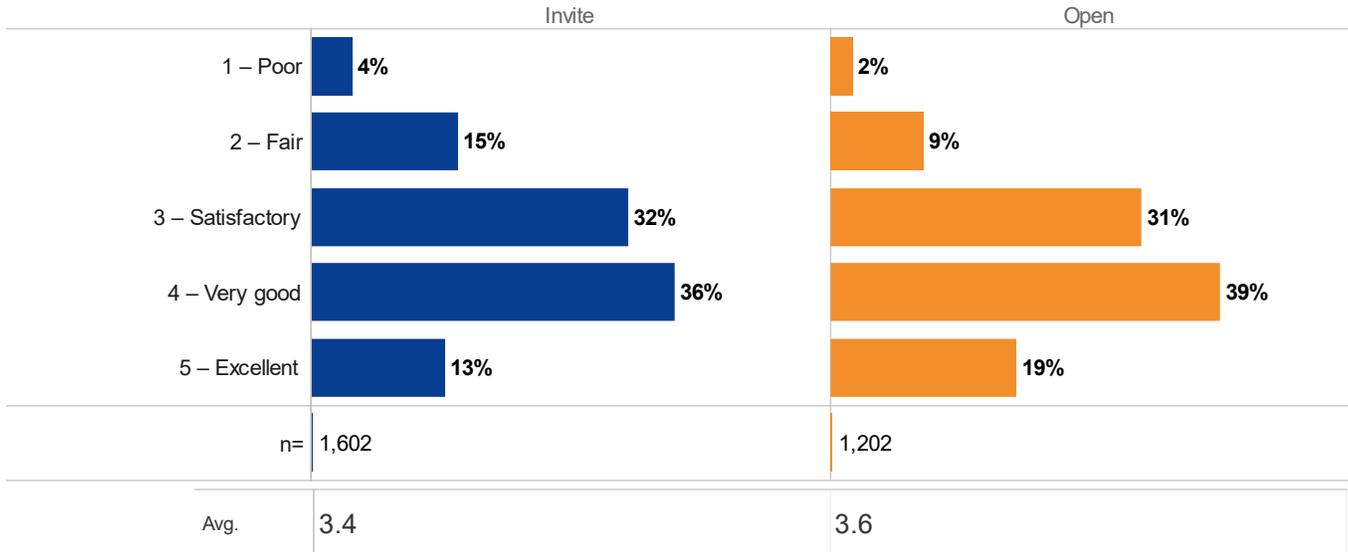
Source: RRC

Figure 35
Current Communication Methods about JCOS

What are ALL THE WAYS you learn about Jefferson County Open Space?

	Invite	Open
At the park/program location	65%	64%
Website (www.jeffco.us/open-space)	40%	56%
Activity-based app (COTREX, AllTrails, etc.)	28%	39%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram)	22%	53%
Local newspapers (Denver Post, Colorado Sun, etc.)	17%	7%
Local television	10%	3%
Jeffco Open Space e-newsletter	9%	17%
Jeffco Open Space text message alerts	3%	13%
None of the above	10%	3%
Other (Please specify):	14%	9%
n=	1,640	1,254
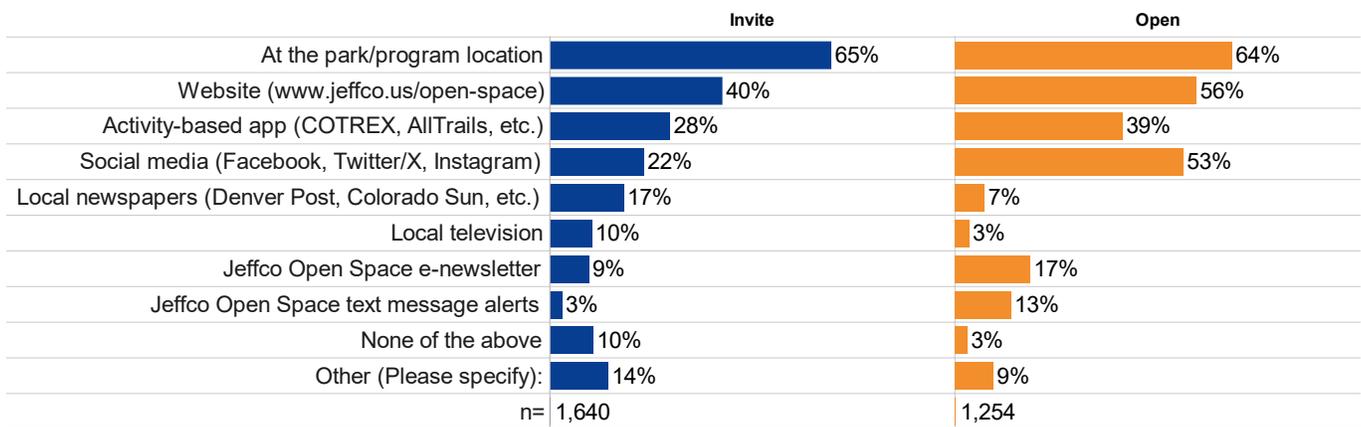
Source: RRC

Figure 36
Preferred Communication Methods for JCOS

Which ONE WAY do you prefer to learn about Jefferson County Open Space?

	Invite	Open
Website (www.jeffco.us/open-space)	25%	28%
At the park/program location	25%	13%
Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram)	13%	30%
Activity-based app (COTREX, AllTrails, etc.)	12%	14%
Jeffco Open Space e-newsletter	9%	6%
Local newspapers (Denver Post, Colorado Sun, etc.)	4%	0.4%
Jeffco Open Space text message alerts	3%	5%
Local television	2%	0.2%
None of the above	1%	
Other (Please specify):	5%	4%
n=	1,290	1,079
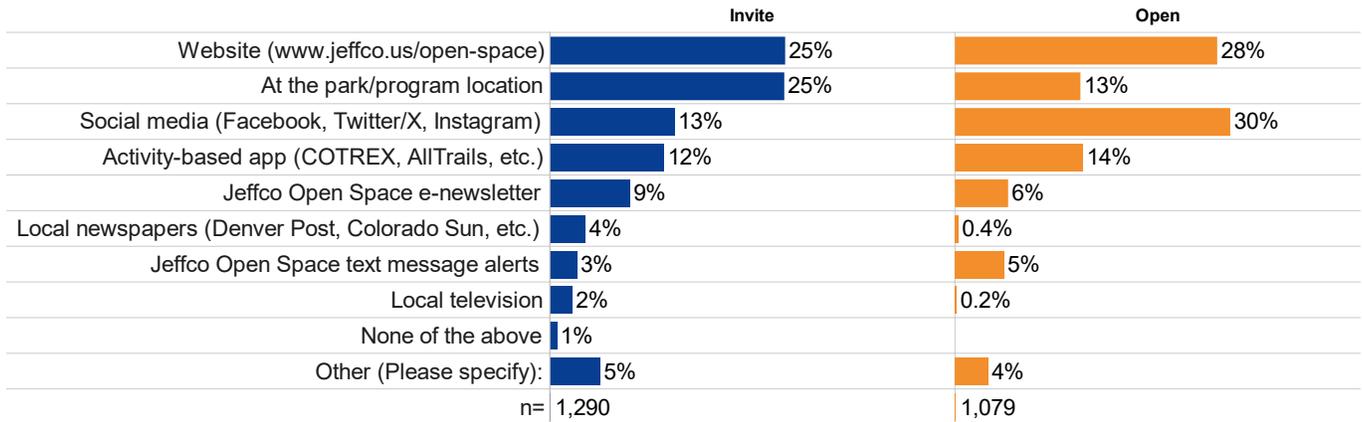
Source: RRC

Figure 37
Importance Ratings

Please rate how important the following are to your experience when visiting Jefferson County Open Space parks.

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	Percent Responding 1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Multi-use natural surface (non-paved) trails (hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.)	Invite	4.0	1,556	9%	14%	36% 41% 77%
	Open	4.3	1,191	7%	12%	59% 81%
Parking availability	Invite	4.2	1,578	7%	11%	33% 48% 81%
	Open	4.1	1,193	9%	16%	33% 43% 76%
Designated use natural surface trails (e.g., hiker and equestrian-only, biker-only)	Invite	3.9	1,558	11%	20%	30% 38% 68%
	Open	4.3	1,193	7%	15%	58% 78%
Restrooms	Invite	4.1	1,591	7%	17%	31% 45% 76%
	Open	3.6	1,191	19%	27%	55%
Enforcement of park regulations	Invite	3.7	1,548	17%	24%	33% 60%
	Open	3.7	1,187	17%	21%	33% 62%
Communication of park regulations	Invite	3.6	1,559	20%	24%	31% 56%
	Open	3.6	1,192	15%	29%	31% 56%
Signs and information kiosks	Invite	3.7	1,560	12%	25%	36% 63%
	Open	3.4	1,182	21%	31%	30% 48%
Multi-use paved trails (hiking, biking equestrian, etc.)	Invite	3.2	1,561	31%	22%	47%
	Open	2.5	1,185	54%	22%	25%
Paper trail maps/brochures	Invite	2.9	1,552	42%	20%	38%
	Open	2.4	1,186	35% 57%	20%	23%
Picnic shelters	Invite	3.0	1,540	36%	30%	34%
	Open	2.2	1,174	30% 32% 61%	26%	13%
Park staff/volunteers on site	Invite	2.4	1,528	55%	28%	17%
	Open	2.1	1,179	37% 30% 66%	20%	13%
Oversized parking availability	Invite	2.2	1,448	53% 63%	11%	26%
	Open	1.8	1,152	64% 78%	8%	13%

Source: RRC

■ 5 - Very important
■ 4
■ 3
■ 2
■ 1 - Not at all important
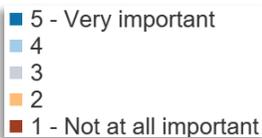
**Figure 38
Ratings of Quality of Experience in JCOS Parks**

Please rate the quality of the following based on your experience when visiting Jefferson County Open Space parks.

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Multi-use natural surface (non-paved) trails (hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.)	Invite	4.0	1,347	3%	23%	42% 31% 74%
	Open	4.0	1,121	7%	20%	34% 39% 73%
Signs and information kiosks	Invite	3.8	1,395	5%	30%	42% 64%
	Open	4.0	1,114	4%	24%	39% 33% 72%
Multi-use paved trails (hiking, biking equestrian, etc.)	Invite	3.9	1,269	7%	25%	39% 28% 67%
	Open	3.9	924	7%	27%	33% 33% 66%
Communication of park regulations	Invite	3.8	1,386	7%	30%	41% 63%
	Open	3.8	1,142	8%	29%	37% 63%
Restrooms	Invite	3.5	1,394	16%	30%	34% 53%
	Open	4.0	1,124	4%	24%	42% 30% 72%
Parking availability	Invite	3.8	1,416	7%	29%	41% 63%
	Open	3.6	1,160	11%	31%	41% 59%
Designated use natural surface trails (e.g., hiker and equestrian-only, biker-only)	Invite	3.8	1,303	6%	31%	36% 27% 62%
	Open	3.6	1,081	20%	23%	29% 28% 58%
Paper trail maps/brochures	Invite	3.6	1,164	17%	28%	32% 55%
	Open	3.8	855	11%	27%	30% 31% 62%
Picnic shelters	Invite	3.6	1,119	8%	40%	34% 53%
	Open	3.7	810	7%	33%	38% 60%
Park staff/volunteers on site	Invite	3.2	996	25%	39%	36%
	Open	3.2	854	24%	38%	38%
Oversized parking availability	Invite	3.3	584	20%	39%	28% 41%
	Open	3.1	471	28%	37%	35%
Enforcement of park regulations	Invite	3.3	1,224	21%	39%	27% 40%
	Open	3.0	1,047	33%	34%	33%

Source: RRC

- ■ 5 - Excellent
- ■ 4
- ■ 3
- ■ 2
- ■ 1 - Poor

Figure 39
Importance vs. Satisfaction

Differences between average importance rating and average rating of quality.
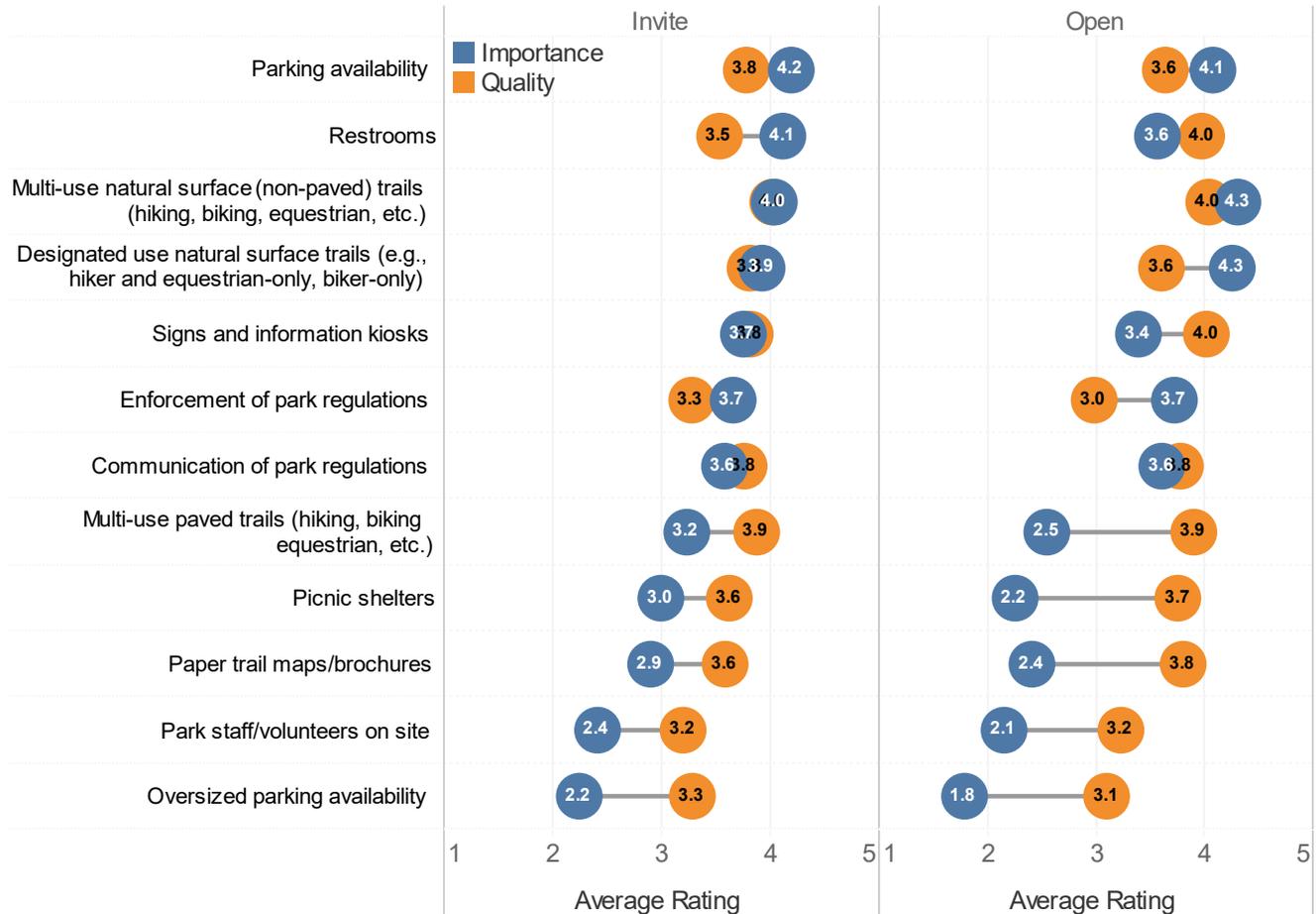
Source: RRC Associates

Figure 40
Natural Resource Preservation/Protection vs. Outdoor Recreation in a Natural Setting

Using the scale below, please select the word choice that indicates what emphasis you would like to see Jefferson County Open Space pursue in the future: Choose the one best answer

	Invite	Open
Strong Emphasis on Natural Resource Preservation/Protection	25%	21%
Slight Emphasis on Natural Resource Preservation/Protection	8%	6%
Equal Balance	48%	29%
Slight Emphasis on Outdoor Recreation in Natural Settings	9%	11%
Strong Emphasis on Outdoor Recreation in Natural Settings	11%	32%
n=	1,540	1,102
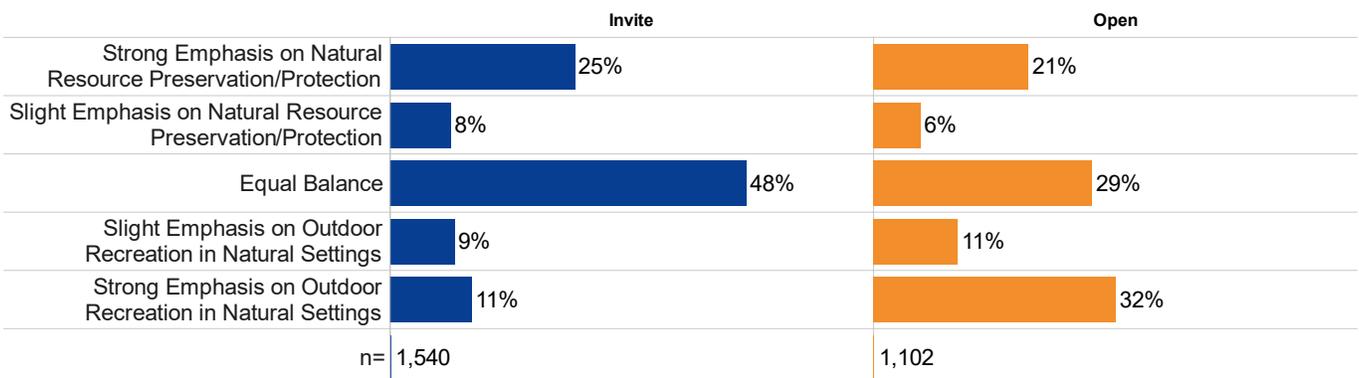
Source: RRC

Figure 41
Level of Support for JCOS Actions

What is your level of support for each of the following focus areas of Jefferson County Open Space?

				Percent Responding		
Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Maintenance of existing parks and trails	Invite	4.5	1,611	2%	7%	58% 91%
	Open	4.5	1,178	1%	7%	62% 92%
Development of new parks and trails	Invite	4.0	1,612	10%	21%	39% 69%
	Open	4.4	1,177	5%	13%	60% 82%
Acquisition of new properties	Invite	3.8	1,611	14%	23%	37% 63%
	Open	4.2	1,181	6%	13%	52% 80%
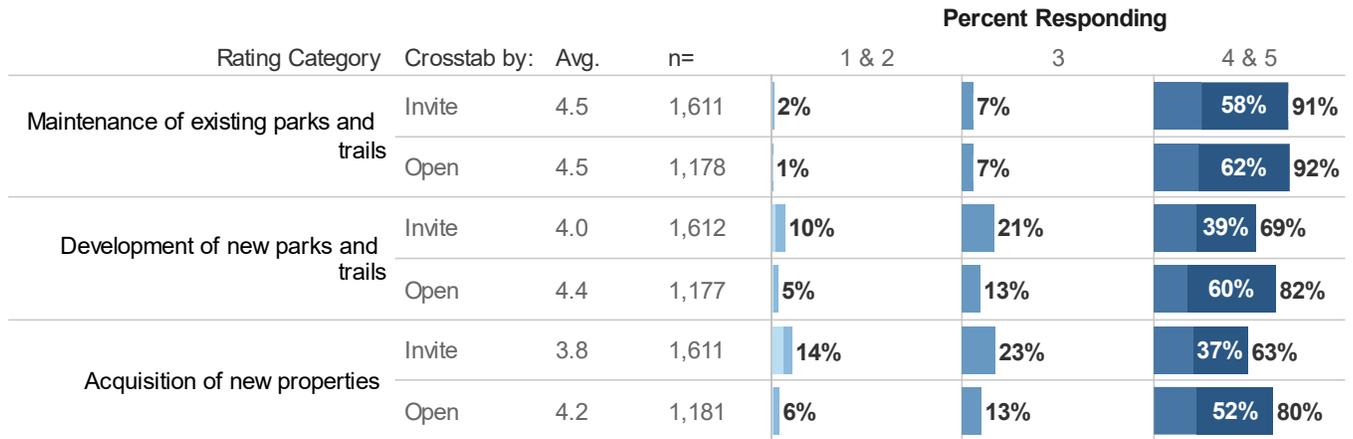
Source: RRC

- 5 - Extremely supportive
- 4 - Greatly supportive
- 3 - Moderately supportive
- 2 - Slightly supportive
- 1 - Not at all supportive

Figure 42
Ratings of Benefits

As they relate to Jefferson County Open Space how important are the following benefits to you?

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	Percent Responding		
				1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Recreation and wellness opportunities (hiking, biking, running, horseback riding, bird watching, fishing, and enjoying the outdoors)	Invite	4.3	1,593	3%	10%	52% 87%
	Open	4.7	1,166	1%	3%	78% 96%
Preservation of scenic views	Invite	4.5	1,572	2%	7%	64% 91%
	Open	4.4	1,158	3%	11%	54% 86%
Overall quality of life in Jefferson County	Invite	4.4	1,583	3%	12%	56% 85%
	Open	4.4	1,159	2%	9%	58% 89%
Healthy environment (filtering water and air, flood prevention and wildfire prevention)	Invite	4.4	1,592	3%	10%	59% 87%
	Open	4.3	1,165	4%	13%	53% 83%
Escape from the urban environment	Invite	4.3	1,581	4%	14%	50% 82%
	Open	4.4	1,165	4%	9%	57% 86%
Feeling a connection to nature	Invite	4.2	1,590	8%	12%	50% 80%
	Open	4.3	1,167	4%	14%	50% 83%
Economic vitality (making Jefferson County an attractive place to live, work, play, and do business)	Invite	3.8	1,589	14%	22%	64%
	Open	3.6	1,156	18%	25%	57%
Cultural resources conservation (protecting traces of the past)	Invite	3.8	1,583	13%	24%	63%
	Open	3.5	1,162	21%	28%	52%
Educational opportunities (learn more about the natural environment, stewardship and trail courtesy)	Invite	3.6	1,579	17%	25%	58%
	Open	3.3	1,158	24%	30%	46%
Supports our local economy and businesses (restaurants, outdoor industry, tourism, etc.)	Invite	3.4	1,586	22%	27%	51%
	Open	3.2	1,160	27%	29%	44%
A place to socialize with family and friends	Invite	3.4	1,583	19%	32%	49%
	Open	3.2	1,157	29%	33%	38%
Scientific opportunities (places to collect data and conduct studies)	Invite	3.3	1,582	26%	31%	44%
	Open	3.1	1,157	33%	27%	40%
Increased property values	Invite	3.2	1,583	33%	25%	42%
	Open	2.9	1,156	37%	27%	36%

Source: RRC

- 5 - Extremely important
- 4 - Greatly important
- 3 - Moderately important
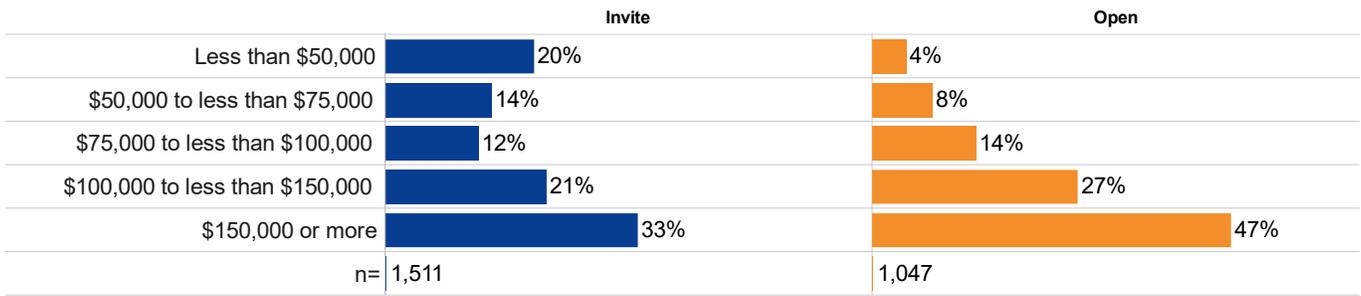- 2 - Slightly important
- 1 - Not at all important

Figure 43
Access Management Support at JCOS

"If available and free to use, would any of the following either increase or decrease my likelihood of visiting a JCOS park?"

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Use an app to gauge parking availability and information about busy times of the year and/or days of the week and/or times of the day before traveling to JCOS parks	Invite	3.8	1,515	7%	29%	39% 64%
	Open	3.7	1,128	5%	38%	36% 58%
Other tools that could improve your planning (please specify):	Invite	3.7	369	11%	40%	36% 49%
	Open	3.7	272	4%	52%	31% 44%
Information about alternative recreation areas and parks throughout the region if JCOS parks are busy	Invite	3.7	1,519	9%	31%	35% 60%
	Open	3.4	1,105	12%	42%	33% 46%
The ability to reserve a parking space at a JCOS trailhead during peak hours	Invite	3.0	1,508	33%	32%	35%
	Open	2.6	1,102	28% 43%	33%	24%
Parking at an off-site parking area and walking up to 15 minutes to access the park	Invite	2.6	1,548	49%	30%	21%
	Open	2.7	1,119	43%	36%	21%
Parking at an off-site parking area and taking a shuttle to the park	Invite	2.2	1,542	39% 66%	20%	15%
	Open	2.0	1,121	43% 67%	23%	10%

Percent Responding

Source: RRC

- 5 - Strongly increase
- 4 - Somewhat increase
- 3 - Neutral
- 2 - Somewhat decrease
- 1 - Strongly decrease

Figure 44
Interaction with Others on JCOS Parks

How do the following situations influence your Jefferson County Open Space park experience?

Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	Percent Responding		
				1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Trail courtesy demonstrated by other visitors	Invite	4.1	1,538	8%	15%	35% 42% 77%
	Open	3.8	1,122	18%	15%	39% 67%
Interaction with staff and volunteers	Invite	3.9	1,426	2%	37%	33% 62%
	Open	4.0	1,026	3%	31%	37% 66%
Friendliness and courtesy of other visitors	Invite	4.0	1,551	4%	19%	47% 31% 77%
	Open	3.8	1,130	8%	25%	43% 67%
Compliance with park regulations by other visitors (e.g., dogs on leash)	Invite	3.9	1,540	12%	20%	42% 68%
	Open	3.6	1,120	27%	18%	34% 56%
Interactions with other visitors	Invite	3.1	1,554	20%	51%	30%
	Open	3.1	1,128	20%	53%	27%
Presence of other visitors	Invite	3.0	1,563	27%	45%	27%
	Open	2.8	1,135	30% 36%	47%	17%

Source: RRC

- 5 - Strongly positive
- 4 - Somewhat positive
- 3 - Neutral
- 2 - Somewhat negative
- 1 - Strongly negative

Figure 45
Specific JCOS Park

Do you have a specific Jefferson County Open Space park you were thinking of when answering the above questions?

	Invite	Open
No	57%	53%
Yes (Which JCOS park?):	35%	44%
Unsure	8%	4%
n=	1,497	1,093

Source: RRC

**Figure 46
Mitigating Climate Change**

In response to climate change Jefferson County Open Space is taking action in several areas. Please rate the following actions by level of importance.

				Percent Responding		
Rating Category	Crosstab by:	Avg.	n=	1 & 2	3	4 & 5
Using native seeds and plants for land restoration and preserving genetic diversity	Invite	4.3	1,563	6%	12%	52% 82%
	Open	4.2	1,080	8%	15%	50% 77%
Improving forest and grassland health to support resilient ecosystems	Invite	4.3	1,565	7%	12%	53% 82%
	Open	4.1	1,081	9%	16%	49% 75%
Buying land to protect wildlife, air quality, and ecosystems	Invite	4.1	1,571	10%	13%	50% 77%
	Open	4.1	1,085	9%	15%	52% 75%
Other action you would like to see JCOS take:	Invite	4.1	222	7%	25%	50% 68%
	Open	4.2	135	10%	16%	64% 73%
Educating the public on how land conservation mitigates climate change	Invite	3.6	1,562	20%	24%	57%
	Open	3.5	1,082	22%	24%	54%
Building eco-friendly trailheads with solar power, EV chargers, and water-saving techniques	Invite	3.5	1,563	20%	25%	55%
	Open	3.4	1,081	27%	24%	50%
Providing more transportation options to parks like trails, bike lanes, shuttles, and public transit	Invite	3.3	1,545	24%	29%	47%
	Open	3.2	1,075	29%	27%	44%
Electrifying JCOS vehicles and tools to cut pollution and improve air quality	Invite	3.3	1,563	28%	26%	46%
	Open	3.0	1,074	35%	26%	38%

Source: RRC

- 5 - Extremely important
- 4 - Greatly important
- 3 - Moderately important
- 2 - Slightly important
- 1 - Not at all important

**Figure 47
Gender**

Are you…?

	Invite	Open
Male	52%	56%
Female	47%	43%
I prefer to identify as:	1%	1%
n=	1,580	1,090

Source: RRC

JEFFERSON
COUNTY COLORADO
Open Space

**Figure 48
Income**

Which category best describes your household income?

	Invite	Open
Less than $50,000	20%	4%
$50,000 to less than $75,000	14%	8%
$75,000 to less than $100,000	12%	14%
$100,000 to less than $150,000	21%	27%
$150,000 or more	33%	47%
n=	1,511	1,047

Source: RRC

**Figure 49
Age**

Age of respondent

	Invite	Open
18 - 24	17%	1%
25 - 34	13%	16%
35 - 44	18%	29%
45 - 54	16%	23%
55 - 64	18%	16%
65 - 74	3%	12%
75 and older	14%	3%
n=	1,533	1,031
Avg.	47.0	48.1
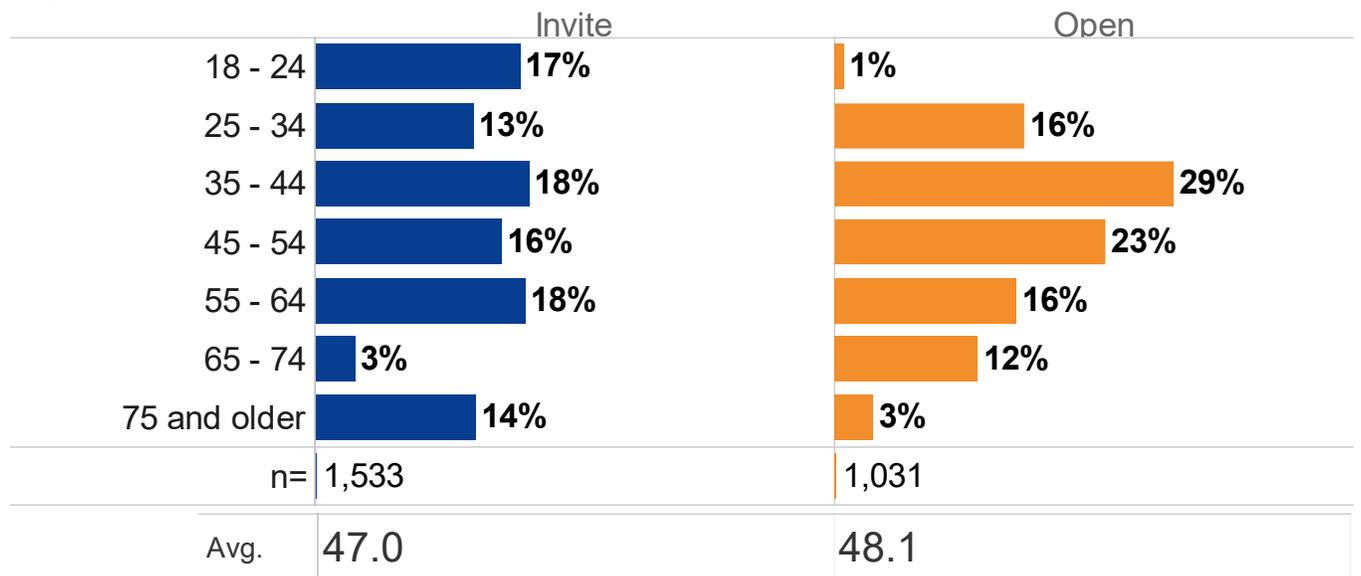
Source: RRC

**Figure 50
Years in Jefferson County**

How many years have you lived in Jefferson County?

	Invite	Open
Less than 1 year	1%	8%
1 - 5 years	32%	22%
6 - 10 years	13%	19%
11 - 20 years	16%	19%
More than 20 years	38%	31%
n=	1,563	1,071
Avg.	19.5	16.5
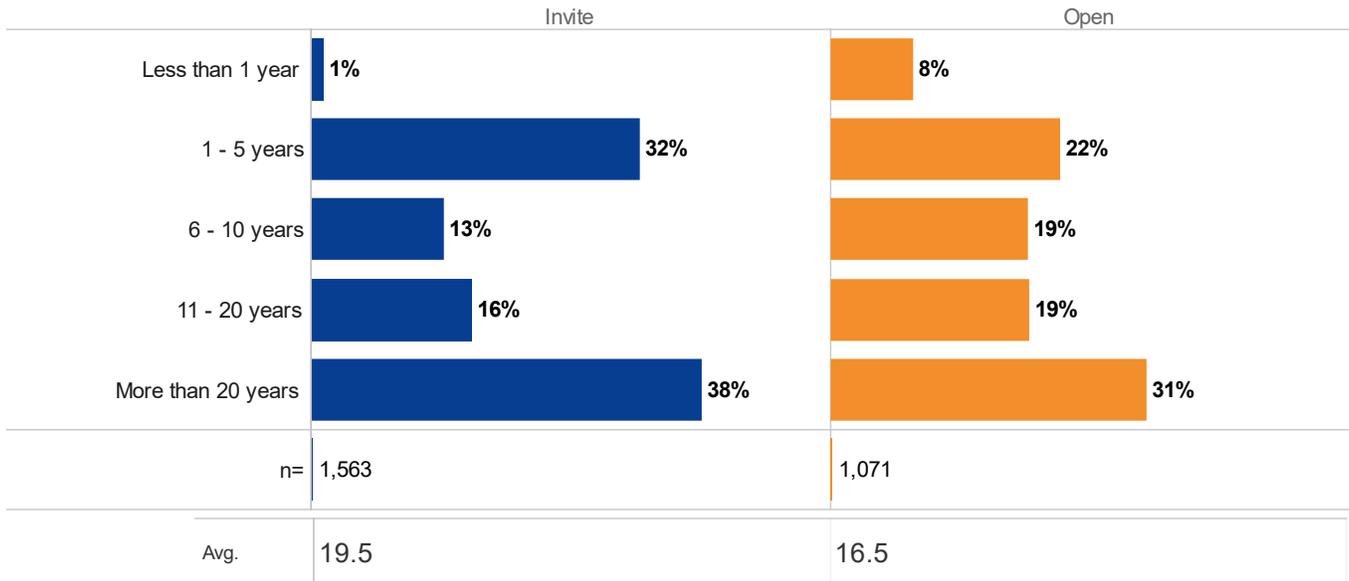
Source: RRC

**Figure 51
Household Makeup**

Which of these categories best applies to your household?

	Invite	Open
Couple, no children	24%	32%
Couple with children at home	23%	29%
Single, no children	19%	13%
Couple, children no longer at home (empty nester)	17%	18%
Multi-generational household (grandparents, parents, children)	7%	2%
Single, children no longer at home (empty nester)	7%	3%
Single with children at home	4%	3%
n=	1,575	1,079
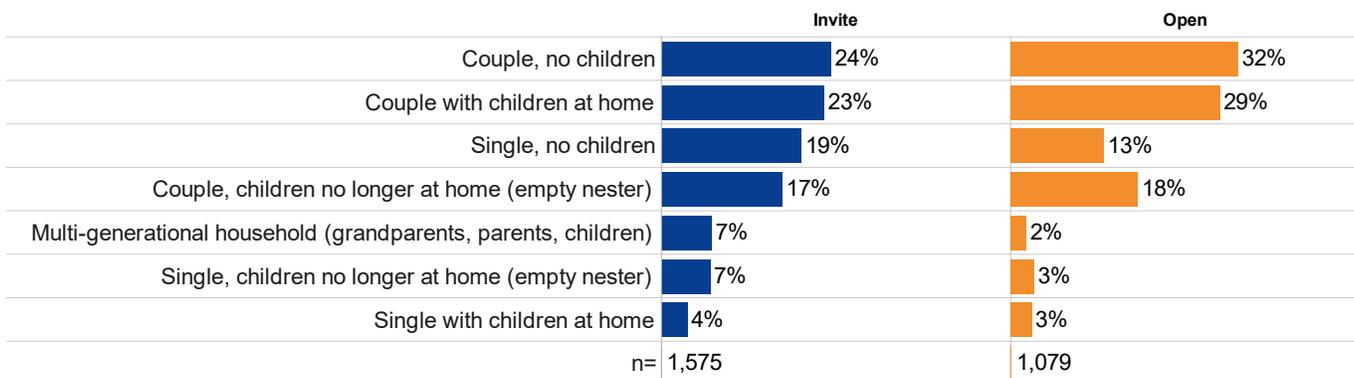
Source: RRC

**Figure 52
Hispanic Origin**

Are you of Spanish, Hispanic, or Latino origin?

	Invite	Open
No	85%	96%
Yes	15%	4%
n=	1,541	1,070
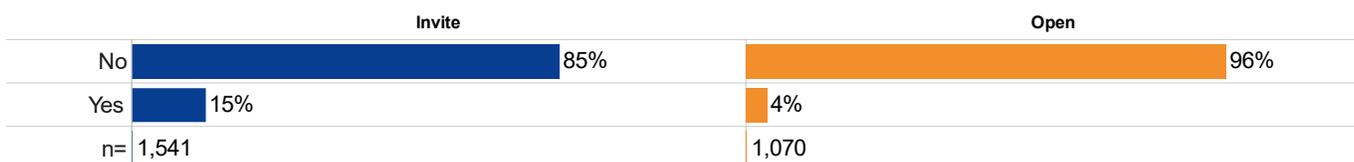
Source: RRC

Figure 53
Race

What race do you consider yourself to be?

	Invite	Open
White/Caucasian	90%	96%
American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native American	5%	1%
Black/African American	4%	0.4%
Asian	2%	2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.4%
Other	8%	3%
n=	1,544	1,054

Source: RRC

APPENDIX – B: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

2024 JEFFERSON COUNTY OPEN SPACE RESIDENT SURVEY

Help shape the future of your community! Jefferson County Open Space (JCOS) wants your feedback to assist in the planning, improving, and maintaining of our community's parks, trails, and open spaces. Please refer to the cover letter for a map showing parks owned and managed by Jefferson County.

1. In which area do you live in Jefferson County according to the map on the cover letter?
- ☐ Plains
- ☐ Mountains
- ☐ Unsure

2. In the past 12 months, how often have you visited a Jefferson County Open Space park? *Choose one answer.*
- ☐ About every day
- ☐ About once a week
- ☐ About once a month
- ☐ Once or a few times a year
- ☐ Never
- ☐ I don't know

3. Why don't you visit Jefferson County Open Space parks more often? *Please select all that apply.*
- ☐ Not aware of parks, programs, and facilities
- ☐ Not enough time
- ☐ Poor condition of parks and facilities/amenities
- ☐ Too many people
- ☐ Too far from home
- ☐ No way to get there
  (Please specify:_____)
- ☐ Not enough parking
- ☐ Feels unsafe
- ☐ Don't have the programs or facilities that I want
  (Please specify:_____)
- ☐ Prefer other parks and locations
  (Which locations?_____)
- ☐ Other reason
  (Please specify:_____)
- ☐ None of the above

4. In the past 12 months, which activities have you done in Jefferson County Open Space parks? *Please select all that apply.*
- ☐ Hiking/walking
- ☐ Enjoying scenery/wildlife viewing
- ☐ Cycling/mountain biking
- ☐ Camping
- ☐ Being outside with my dog
- ☐ Horseback riding
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Running
- ☐ Picnicking
- ☐ Learning about nature and history
- ☐ Rock climbing
- ☐ Ice climbing
- ☐ Hang-gliding/paragliding
- ☐ Geocaching
- ☐ XC skiing/snowshoeing
- ☐ Sledding
- ☐ Tubing/wading/swimming
- ☐ Whitewater boating (rafting, kayaking)
- ☐ Other (Please specify: _____)
- ☐ None of the above

5. Which activity (in Question 4) is your most frequent activity? *If you have never visited Jefferson County Open Space, write "None."*

_____

6. How would you rate your level of satisfaction with your overall experience in Jefferson County Open Space parks?

1 – Poor	2 – Fair	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Very good	5 – Excellent	Don't know or N/A
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

7. If you would like, please explain your ratings for your overall satisfaction with Jefferson County Open Space parks:

_____

8. Overall, how would you rate Jefferson County Open Space in providing <u>information</u> about parks, facilities, trails, and programs?

1 – Poor	2 – Fair	3 – Satisfactory	4 – Very good	5 – Excellent
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. What are ALL THE WAYS you learn about Jefferson County Open Space? *Please select all that apply.*

- ☐ 1) At the park/program location
- ☐ 2) Local television
- ☐ 3) Jeffco Open Space e-newsletter
- ☐ 4) Jeffco Open Space text message alerts
- ☐ 5) Website (www.jeffco.us/open-space)
- ☐ 6) Social media (Facebook, Twitter/X, Instagram)
- ☐ 7) Local newspapers (Denver Post, Colorado Sun, etc.)
- ☐ 8) Activity-based app (COTREX, AllTrails, etc.)
- ☐ 9) Other:_____
- ☐ 10) None of the above

10. Which ONE WAY do you prefer to learn about Jefferson County Open Space? Write the number from question 9:

_____

11. Please rate: A) How important are the following to your experience when visiting Jefferson County Open Space parks? and B) How would you rate the quality of each?

Fill in two boxes per row (one each in column A and column B):	A) IMPORTANCE TO YOUR EXPERIENCE					B) QUALITY OF YOUR EXPERIENCE					
	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT				VERY IMPORTANT	POOR				EXCELLENT	DOES NOT APPLY
	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4	5	x
Parking availability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Oversized parking availability	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Restrooms	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Signs and information kiosks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Communication of park regulations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Paper trail maps/brochures	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Picnic shelters	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Park staff/volunteers on site	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Enforcement of park regulations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multi-use natural surface (non-paved) trails (hiking, biking, equestrian, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Multi-use paved trails (hiking, biking equestrian, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Designated use natural surface trails (e.g., hiker and equestrian-only, biker-only)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

12. Using the scale below, please select the word choice that indicates what emphasis you would like to see Jefferson County Open Space pursue in the future: *Choose the one best answer.*

NATURAL RESOURCE PRESERVATION/PROTECTION		← BALANCE →	OUTDOOR RECREATION IN NATURAL SETTING	
Strong Emphasis	Slight Emphasis	Equal Emphasis	Slight Emphasis	Strong Emphasis
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

13. What is your level of support for each of the following focus areas of Jefferson County Open Space?

	Not at all supportive 1	Slightly supportive 2	Moderately supportive 3	Greatly supportive 4	Extremely supportive 5
Acquisition of new properties	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Maintenance of existing parks and trails	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Development of new parks and trails	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

14. As they relate to Jefferson County Open Space how important are the following benefits to you?

	Not at all important 1	Slightly important 2	Moderately important 3	Greatly important 4	Extremely important 5
Recreation and wellness opportunities (hiking, biking, running, horseback riding, bird watching, fishing, and enjoying the outdoors)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
A place to socialize with family and friends	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feeling a connection to nature	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Overall quality of life in Jefferson County	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Escape from the urban environment	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Preservation of scenic views	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Healthy environment (filtering water and air, flood prevention and wildfire prevention)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Scientific opportunities (places to collect data and conduct studies)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Cultural resources conservation (protecting traces of the past)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educational opportunities (learn more about the natural environment, stewardship and trail courtesy)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Supports our local economy and businesses (restaurants, outdoor industry, tourism, etc.)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Economic vitality (making Jefferson County an attractive place to live, work, play, and do business)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Increased property values	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

15. For each hypothetical statement below, please rate how much you agree or disagree with the following:
"If available and free to use, would any of the following either increase or decrease my likelihood of visiting a JCOS park?":

	Strongly decrease 1	Somewhat decrease 2	Neutral 3	Somewhat increase 4	Strongly increase 5	Don't know X
Use an app to gauge parking availability and information about busy times of the year and/or days of the week and/or times of the day before traveling to JCOS parks	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parking at an off-site parking area and walking up to 15 minutes to access the park	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Parking at an off-site parking area and taking a shuttle to the park	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
The ability to reserve a parking space at a JCOS trailhead during peak hours	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Information about alternative recreation areas and parks throughout the region if JCOS parks are busy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other tools that could improve your planning (please specify: _____)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

16. How do the following situations influence your Jefferson County Open Space park experience?

	Strongly Negative 1	Negative 2	Neutral 3	Positive 4	Strongly Positive 5	Don't know X
Presence of other visitors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interactions with other visitors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Friendliness and courtesy of other visitors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Compliance with park regulations by other visitors (e.g., dogs on leash)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Trail courtesy demonstrated by other visitors	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Interaction with staff and volunteers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

17. Do you have a specific Jefferson County Open Space park you were thinking of when answering the previous questions? (Reference the park map on the back of the cover letter.)

☐ Yes (Which JCOS park? _____)   ☐ No   ☐ Unsure

18. In response to climate change, Jefferson County Open Space is taking action in several areas. Please rate the following actions by level of importance.

	Not at all important 1	Slightly important 2	Moderately important 3	Greatly important 4	Extremely important 5	Don't know X
Buying land to protect wildlife, air quality, and ecosystems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Improving forest and grassland health to support resilient ecosystems	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Using native seeds and plants for land restoration and preserving genetic diversity	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Building eco-friendly trailheads with solar power, EV chargers, and water-saving techniques	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Electrifying JCOS vehicles and tools to cut pollution and improve air quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Educating the public on how land conservation mitigates climate change	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Providing more transportation options to parks like trails, bike lanes, shuttles, and public transit	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Other action you would like to see JCOS take: _____	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

These final questions are for analysis purposes only. All responses will remain confidential and you will not be personally associated with your answers.

19. Are you...?
☐ Male
☐ Female
☐ I prefer to self-describe. Please tell us:
_____

20. Which category best describes your household income? *Include all sources of income and all people living in your home.*
☐ Less than $50,000
☐ $50,000 to less than $75,000
☐ $75,000 to less than $100,000
☐ $100,000 to less than $150,000
☐ $150,000 or more

21. In what year were you born?

_____ 4-digit year

22. How many years have you lived in Jefferson County? *If less than one year, write "0."*

_____ years

23. Which of these categories best applies to your household?
☐ Single, no children
☐ Single with children at home
☐ Singe, children no longer at home (empty nester)
☐ Couple, no children
☐ Couple with children at home
☐ Couple, children no longer at home (empty nester)
☐ Multi-generational home (grandparents, parents, children)

24. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?
☐ Yes   ☐ No

25. Which racial or ethnic group best describes you? *Please select all that apply.*
☐ Black/African American
☐ Asian
☐ American Indian, Alaskan Native, or Native American
☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
☐ White/Caucasian
☐ Other

Please share anything else, good or bad, about your experience(s) at Jefferson County Open Space parks:

_____

_____

Please return your completed survey in the enclosed envelope. Thank you for your participation in this study!

JEFFERSON COUNTY COLORADO Open Space