



# Public Consultation to Guide Recreation and Cultural Services in the Municipality of Mississippi Mills



# Objectives of the Study

1. Undertake a public consultation to understand Mississippi Mills resident perception of and participation in recreation and cultural services and programming;
2. Determine potential immediate and long-term options for the municipality through trends in resident's priorities and preferences; and,
3. Contribute information to guide strategic planning, budgeting decisions and knowledge of residents' priorities.

# About the Methods

- Collaborative with Steering Committee
- Cross-sectional approach
- Multi-channel; online and paper
- Multiple non-probability sampling approaches
- Results review and workshops with staff

## Research Design



- 325 surveys completed
- Positive comparison to population
  - Age
  - Ethnicity
- Differences compared to population
  - More females
  - Higher education level, larger families

## Participation Rate



- Reliable – 95% of the responses are centred around the average
- Margin of error is +/- 6% at 95% confidence level
- Standardized and comparable questions enhance validity
- Descriptive, cross-tabulations and regression analysis (key driver model)

## Reliability and Validity



**The results are sufficiently accurate and complete to support the conclusions of the research**

# According to Residents . . .

87%

Are proud to say they are from Mississippi Mills

83%

Agree Mississippi Mills is a vibrant community

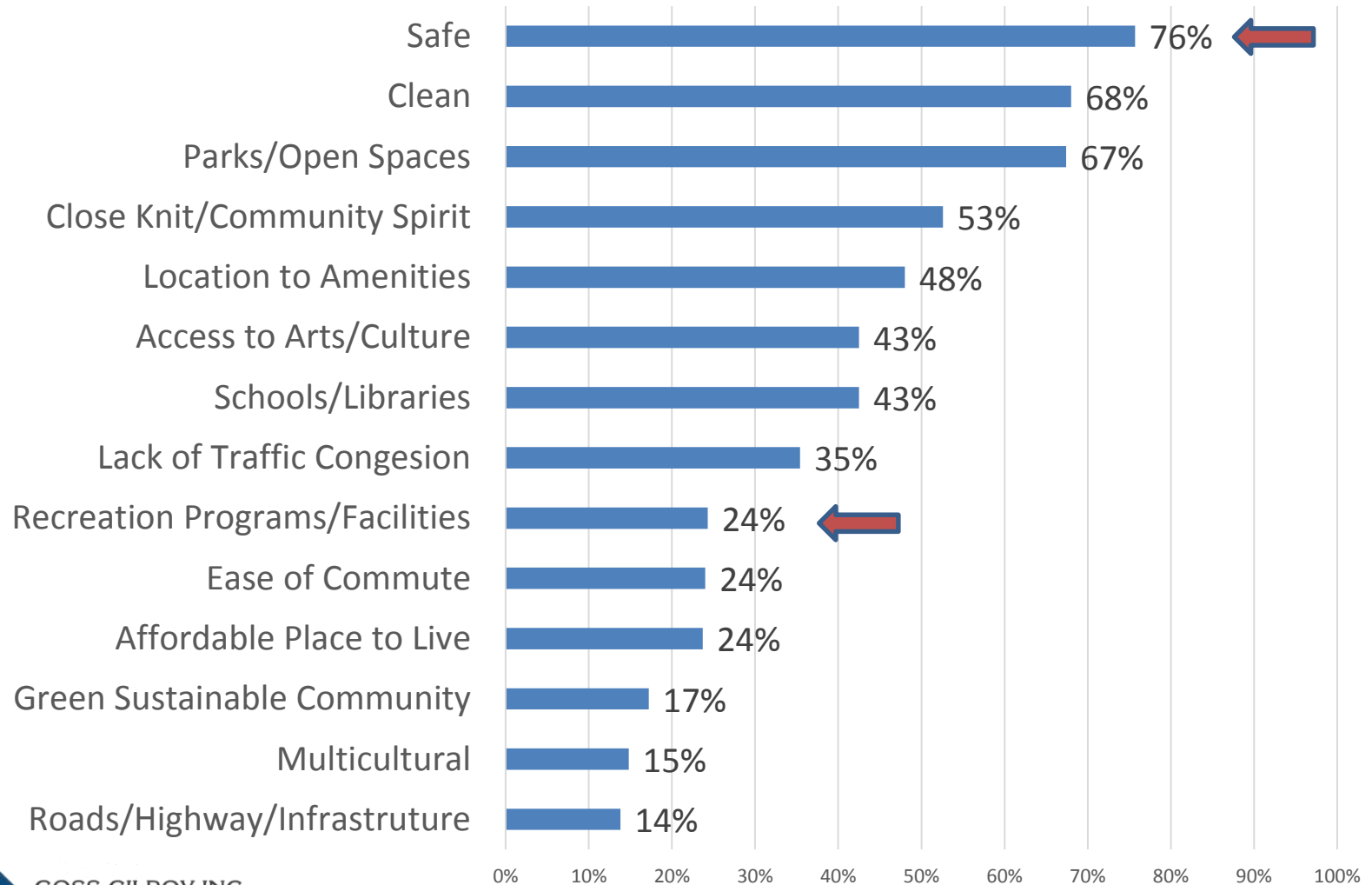
78%

Agree Mississippi Mills is an open and welcoming community

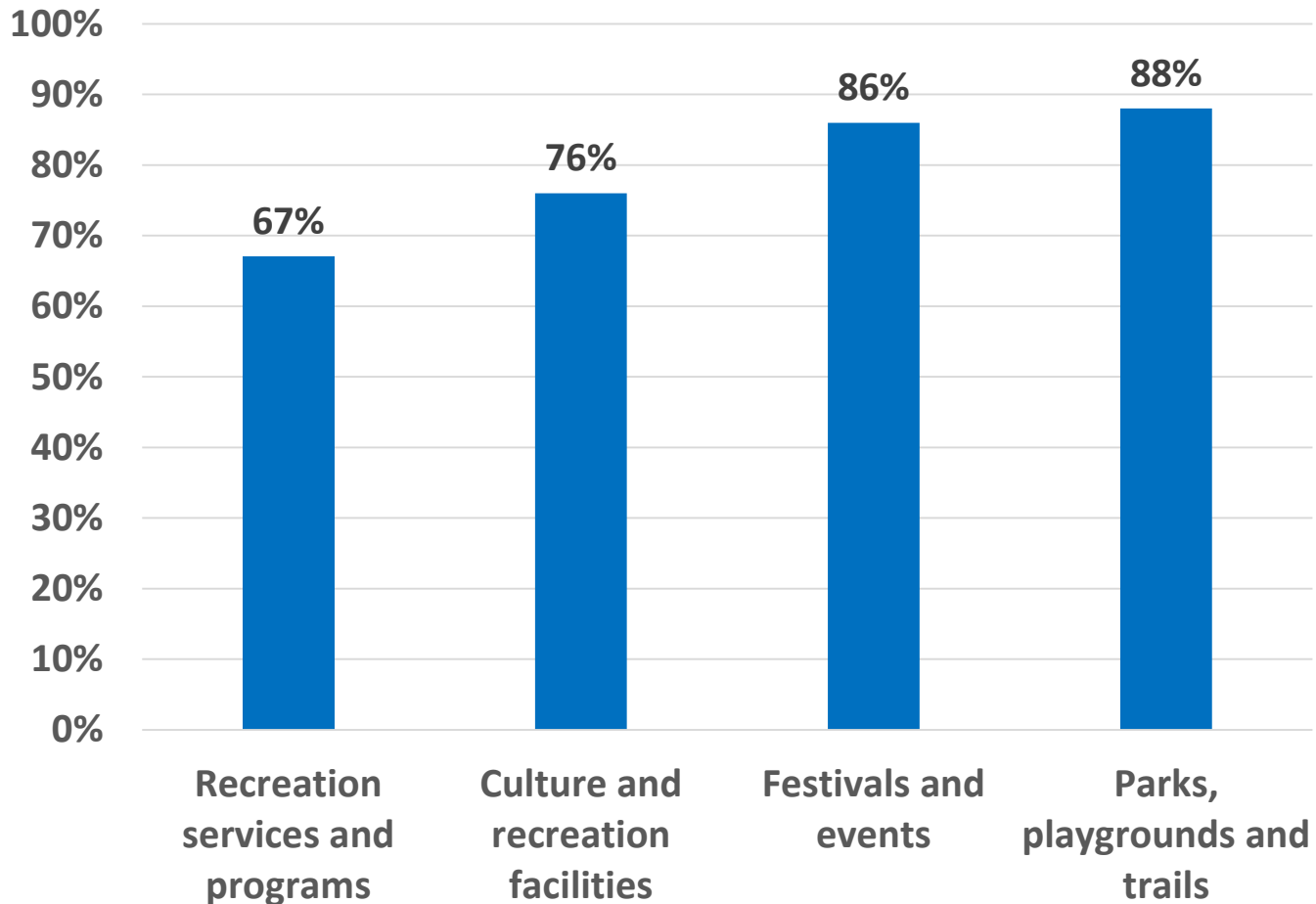
**“My impression is that Mississippi Mills is a very vibrant community and already offers a lot of services that I'm happy with. I'm looking forward to seeing what comes next.”**

**Survey Respondent**

# The Most Appealing Things About Living in the Municipality

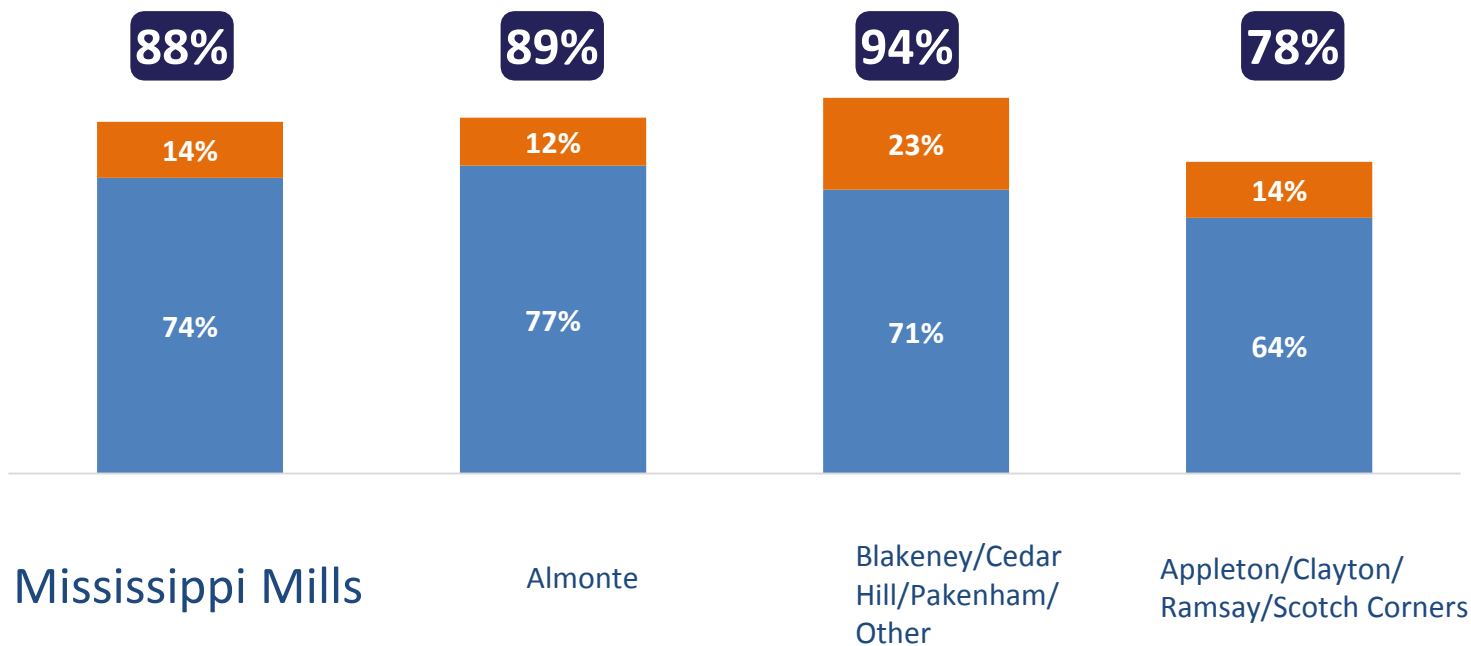


# Overall Satisfaction with Recreation and Cultural Activities



# Parks, Playgrounds and Trails

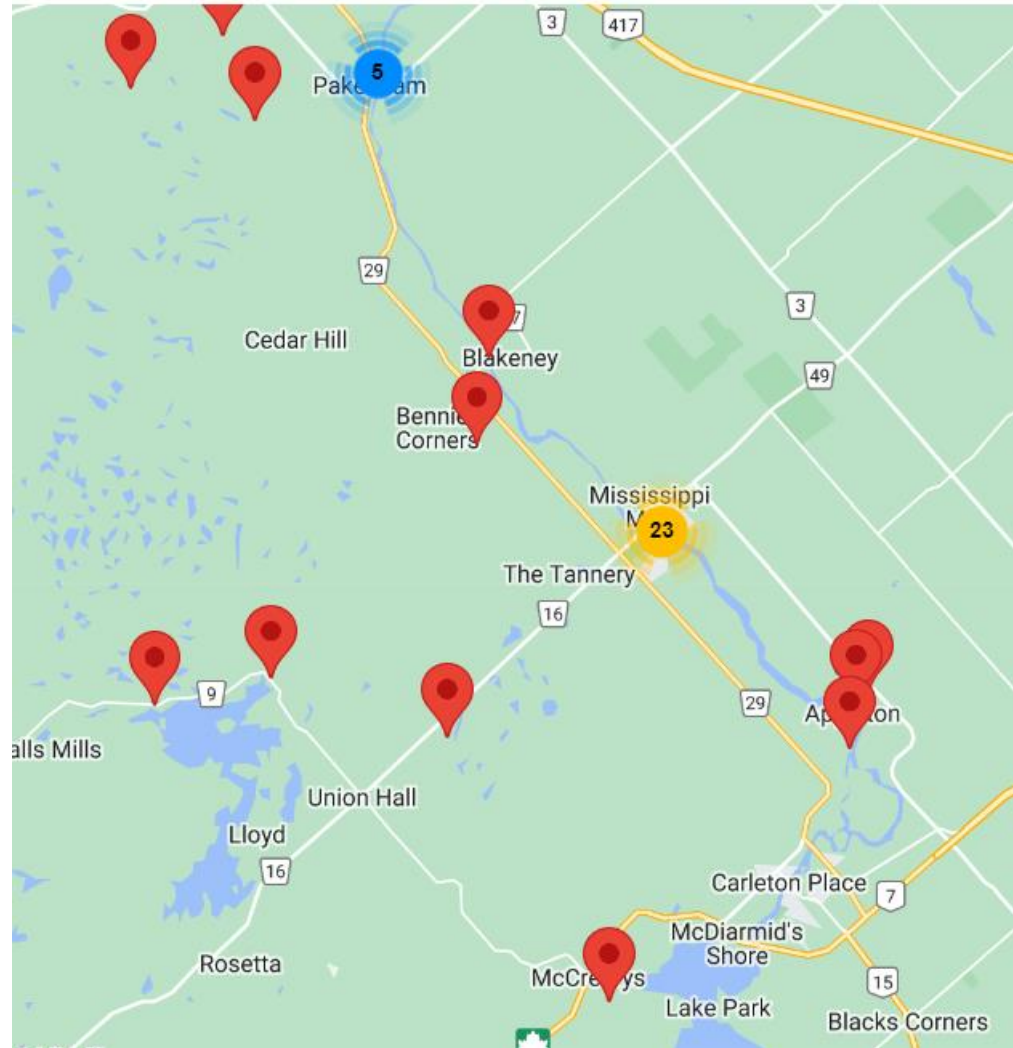
- One of the most appealing things about living in the Municipality
- Overall satisfaction with parks, playgrounds or trails is very high



■ Rating of 8 or higher ■ Rating of 7

# Strengths of Parks, Playgrounds and Trails

- Residents use these spaces! (94%)
- Likelihood of visiting in the future is high (86%)



Source: [www.mississippimills.ca](http://www.mississippimills.ca)



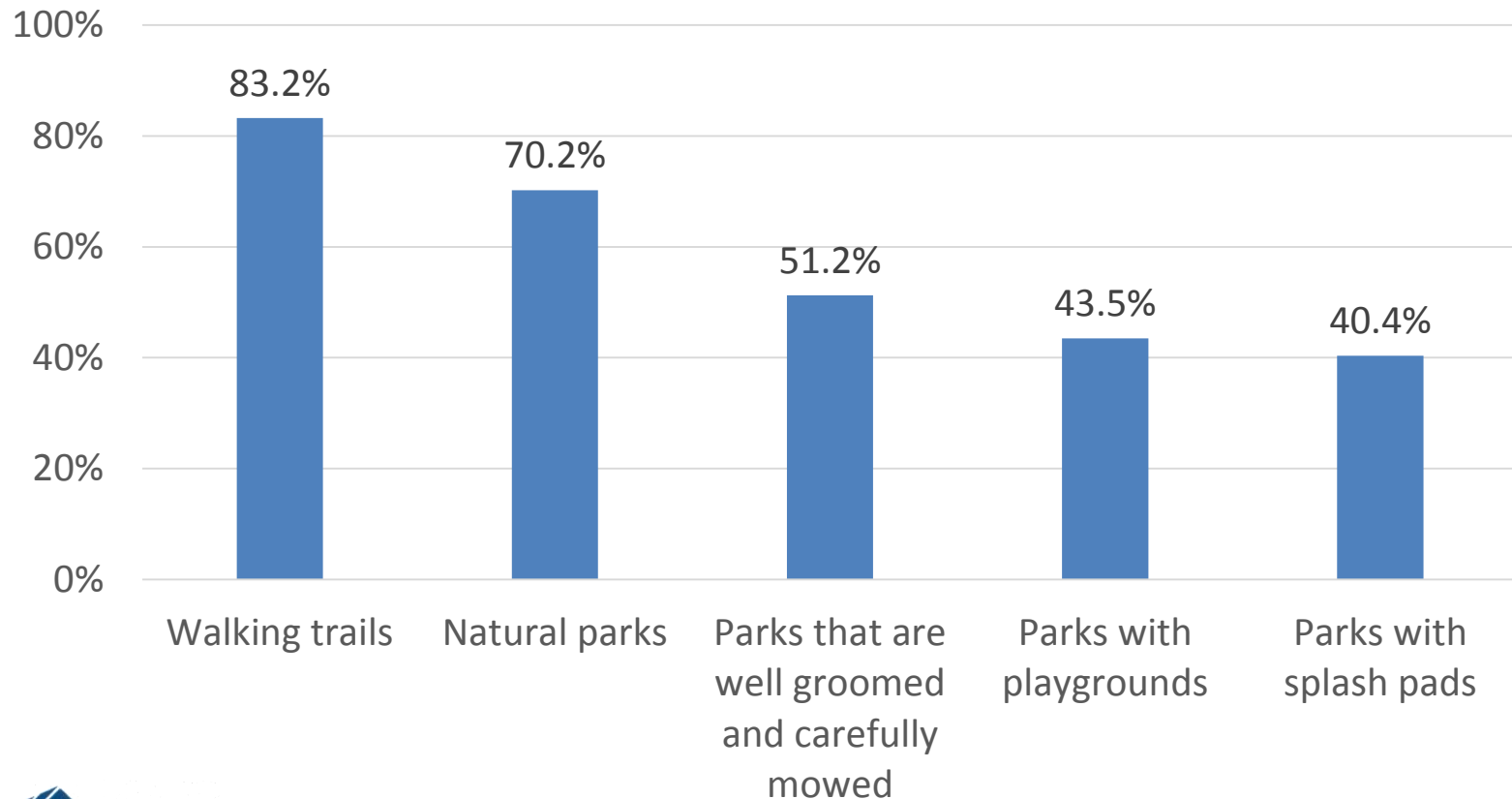
# Gaps



- This area is a good example of the Disney Model
  - Moving from satisfied to extremely satisfied (“more good”)
- Likely small influence opportunity for the Municipality
- Newer residents are not aware (13%)

# Future Interests

- Can not ignore the natural environment, parks and open spaces, already highly favourable



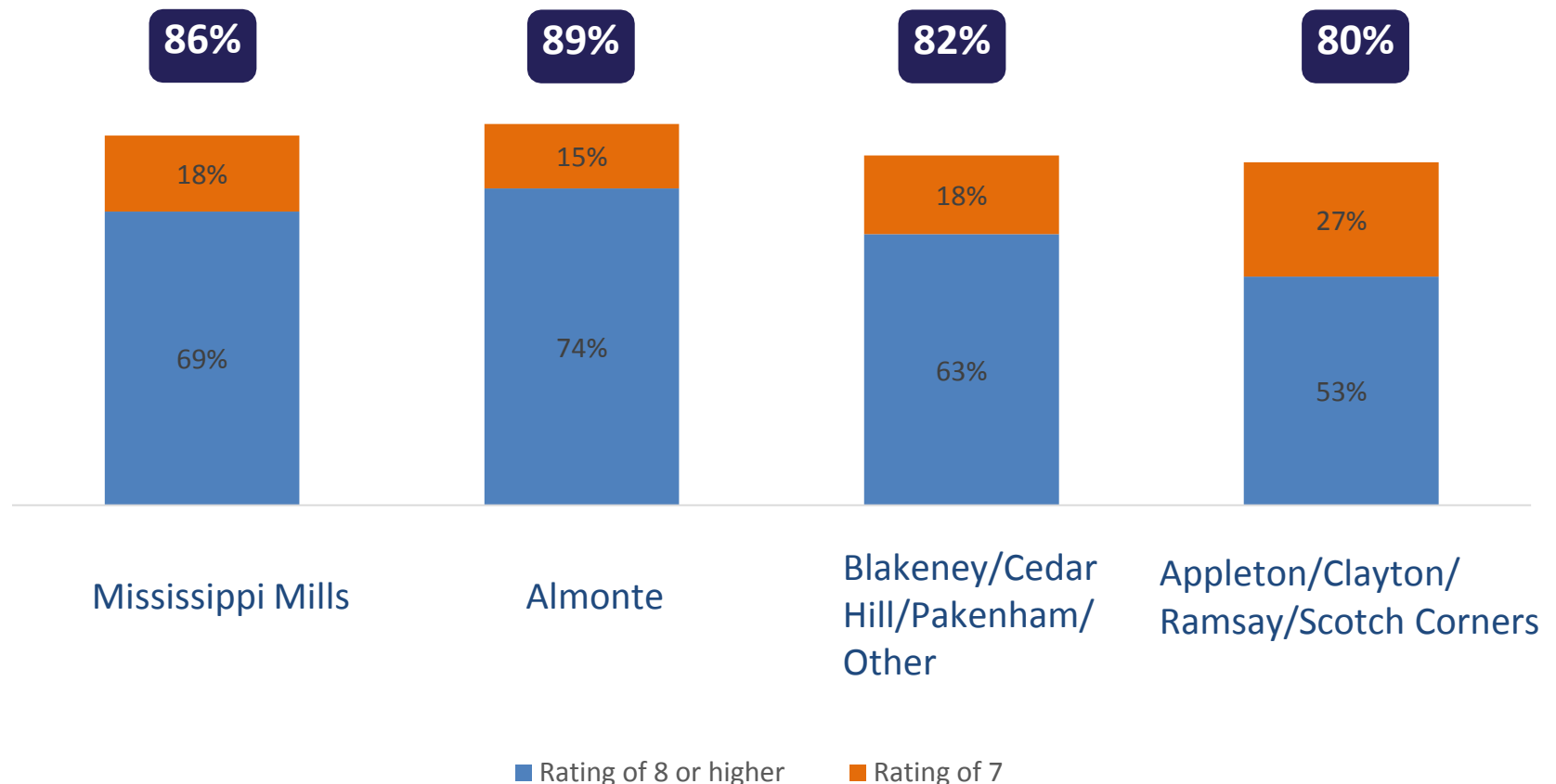
# Next Steps



- Moving from high to slightly more high ?
- Maintenance at this level is important
- Balanced with other priorities identified through the Growth Management Planning Project and available resources
- Work with other owners to ensure maintenance is upheld
- Consider increasing awareness of the Municipality's role in relation to all infrastructure in this area

# Festivals and Events

- All communities in Mississippi Mills have high satisfaction with festivals and events



# Events of Primary Strength

- The most important events to residents, and residents are highly satisfied
- Attendance has rebounded since the pandemic and are better attended than 2 years ago
- Residents are likely to attend in future



Source: [www.mississippimills.ca](http://www.mississippimills.ca)

# Gaps in Festivals and Events



- Events are not always appealing (at 80-89% you cannot please everyone!)
- 28% of survey respondents did not know about the events
- Three areas appear to be of high importance but received low satisfaction from residents:
  - Variety
  - Older-adult friendliness
  - Bicycle Month
- A disconnect with respect to the perceived versus actual role of Mississippi Mills. Seen as a sponsor or facilitator, when in actuality, the municipality sponsors, facilitates and/or delivers the events.

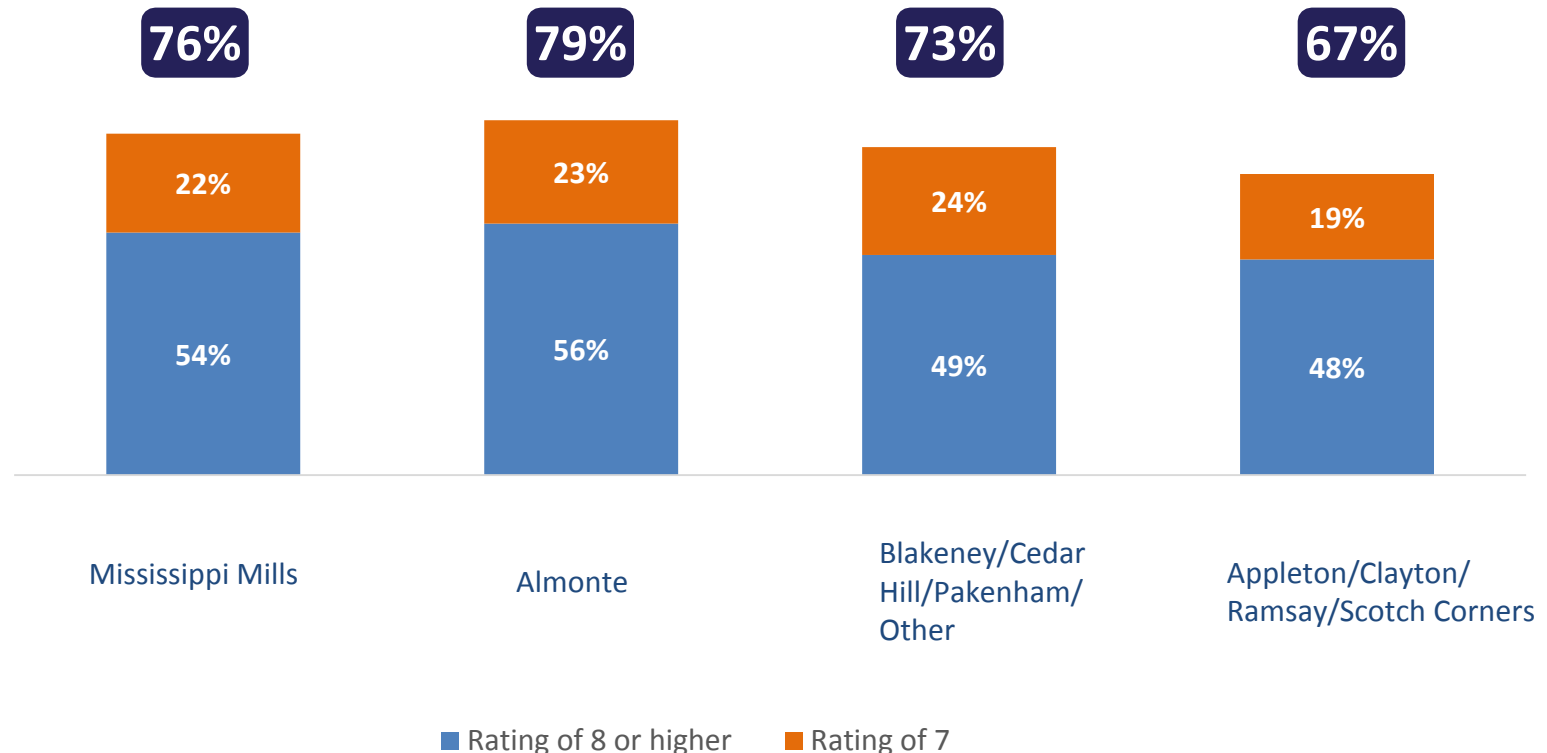
# Next Steps



- Moving from high to slightly more high
- Balanced with other priorities identified through the Growth Management Planning Project and available resources
- Continue to explore role of volunteers to assist/own events and festivals – consistent with 2013 findings
  - Possibility for greater variety
- Increase awareness – locally, regionally, provincially (for some)
- Additional consultations with stakeholders to prioritize and advance

# Culture and Recreation Facilities

- Overall satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities is moderately high, with Almonte residents being most satisfied
- The municipality is expected to maintain (75%), develop (44%) or partially fund (36%) facilities





# Facilities Primary Strengths

- A large proportion (88%) of residents report visiting cultural and recreation facilities for entertainment purposes.
  - More than one-half indicated they visited facilities for health and fitness (56%)
- Visits have rebounded in the past year, in some cases exceeding pre-pandemic levels
- Likelihood to visit in future is high (83%)



# Gaps



Swimming Pool



Pickle Ball Courts



Dog Park



Outdoor sports

- Residents want more fitness opportunities /facilities
- Consistent with 2013 findings

# Gaps

- 39% of survey respondents did not know about the facilities
- Mississippi Mills has two primary weaknesses influencing satisfaction with cultural and recreational facilities (high importance and low satisfaction):
  - The cleanliness and maintenance of facilities (also identified in 2013)
  - Visiting for education purposes

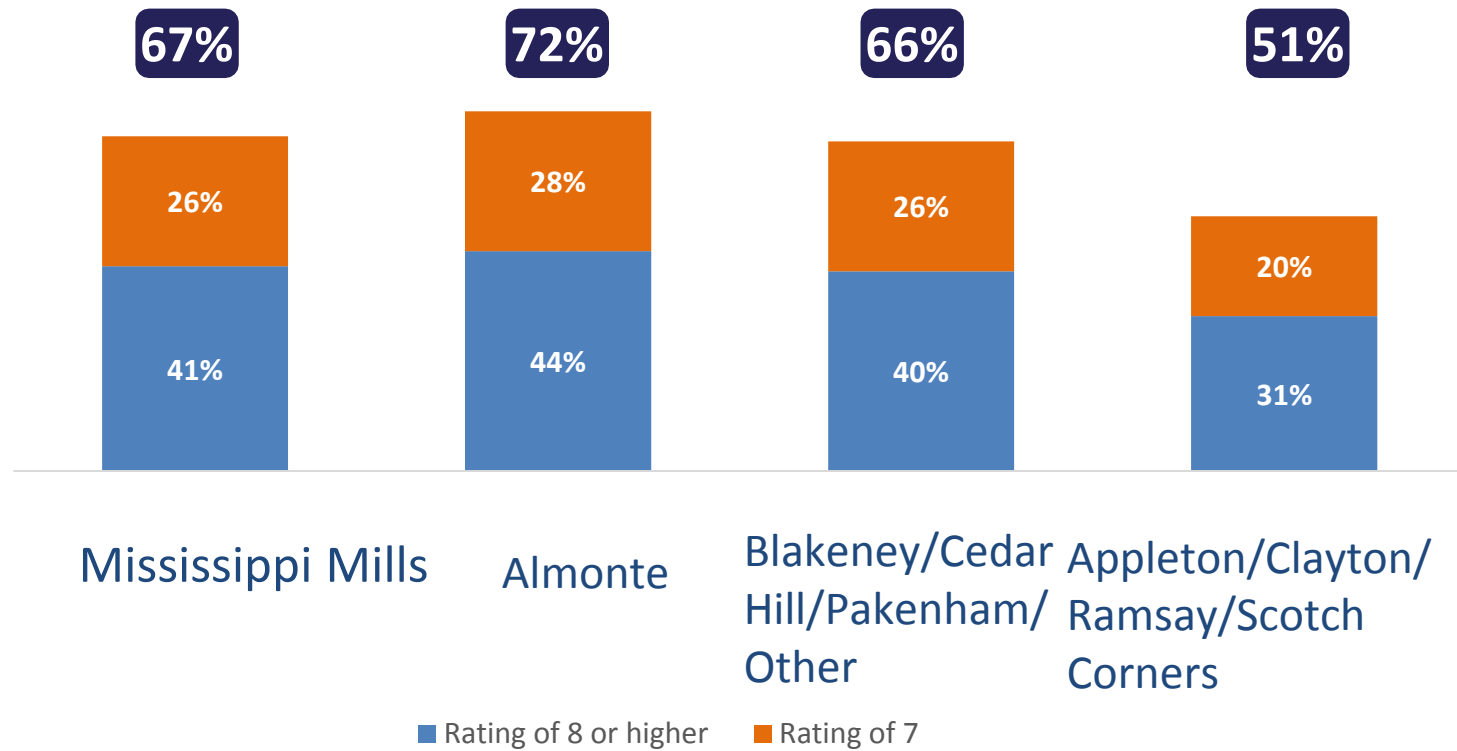
# Next Steps



- As with the 2013 Parks and Recreation Master Plan, the current study also indicates the need for increased attention to the maintenance and cleanliness of facilities.
- Where Mississippi Mills does not own a facility, but provides funding support, it may wish to ensure formal agreements are in place between the Municipality and the tenant organization, such as those in museums and halls, so that one single maintenance standard is in place for municipally owned and municipally funded facilities in addition to potentially creating a policy on minimum public accessibility for facilities that are funded (but not owned).
- Cultural and recreation facilities may also require rebranding to shift residents' perceptions and experiences and increase attendance. Cultural and recreation facilities that are perceived as educational and entertaining should be promoted, with communications strategies put into place that increase awareness of the available resources.
- As with other program and services, additional consultations with businesses and community organizations, employees, advocacy groups, partners, and other internal and/or external stakeholder groups will be instrumental in prioritizing and ultimately advancing the most important elements to be included in the Recreation and Cultural Plan.

# Recreational Services and Programs

- Overall satisfaction with recreational services and programs is moderate, lowest of all areas



- Acknowledge the increase in non-municipal run recreation programs since 2018
- Residents highly likely to participate in future (76%)

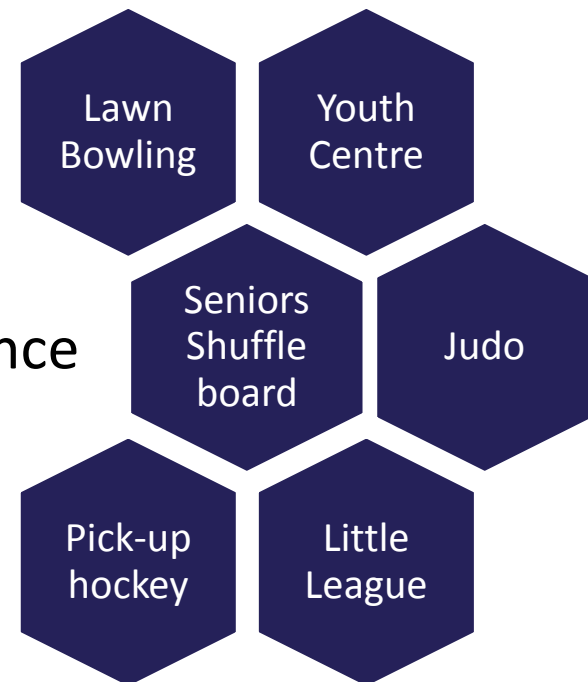
# Primary Strengths of Programs

- Participate for health and fitness;
- The friendliness of activities for youth and children;
- The friendliness of activities for older adults;
- The affordability of programs and activities offered

# Gaps

- Similar neutral degree of satisfaction in 2013 and 2018
- Lack of awareness
- Ease of registration
- The cleanliness and maintenance of facilities
- Ease of finding information on recreation programs and services

Low performance but high importance







# Next Steps



In the short-term (i.e., not dependent on the 10-year plan):

- Consider early activities in messaging and increasing awareness of how services are opening post-pandemic.
- Create a strategic communications plan to assist with increasing awareness of programs and services being offered, whether directly from the Municipality or via volunteer organizations.
- Positioning of tools and information on the Municipality's website (location of information) so recreation programming information is more easily accessed.
- Consider the importance of enabling online access to registration and payment capabilities. This will include a policy review to implement the use of credit cards for payment.

# Next Steps (cont'd)



For the long-term and development of the 10-year Master Plan:

- Leverage the understanding of changes and growth of the Municipality being researched through the Growth Management Planning study, including considerations for potential recreational space limitations.
- Conduct focus groups (or interviews) to narrow resident needs with local groups who provide services to the community, and local organizations who organize and run events throughout the Municipality to determine the most critical gaps in programming, factoring in potential for competition with private business in the identification of new or expanded programming.
- Consider a hybrid model of delivery and facilitation, or strategic relationships/partner models with a strategy to outreach to community organizations or others where it makes most sense to meet needs in an efficient and effective way.

# Next Steps (cont'd)



For the long-term and development of the 10-year Master Plan:

- Review additional opportunities for and increasing awareness of volunteer designed and delivered programs.
- In order to prioritize efforts and resources committed to recreation and cultural services conduct a review of practices in other municipalities so Mississippi Mills can align itself with known or innovative practices.
- Review options, capacities and role of the Municipality to support residents that must access services outside of the Municipality due to major/large programs not being available within Mississippi Mills.
- To support ongoing insight to resident satisfaction, consider policy development around undertaking regular client satisfaction and needs determination activities for program delivered by the Municipality but also by volunteers.

# Child Care Services



- Demand for services is very high; >300 children on the waitlist, increasing regularly and the majority are seeking spaces for infants
- Those with children and not using municipal childcare use alternative services such as home or private daycare, or find childcare too expensive (very few).
- The increase in residents working from home as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed somewhat to residents not needing childcare.
- Most report role of MM is to deliver the program, and maintain the child care centers
- Offering variable hours and different programming (e.g., nature schools) are noted to possibly increase use, but likely not needed

# Child Care Services



- Parents are very satisfied (84%) with most aspects of child care services; the
  - convenience of location,
  - cleanliness and maintenance of facilities, and,
  - variety of programs offered ranking highest in satisfaction.
- Other notable strengths including ease of registration; quality of care; healthy, safe, and positive learning environment; helpfulness, sensitivity and responsiveness of staff;

# Gaps

- Minimal:
  - Updates about programming or child participation/progress
    - Need to consult on what information is of most benefit to parents
  - Transparency of waiting list
  - Timely invoicing



- But does not meet the needs of communities
  - Locations
  - Volumes

# Next Steps

- Explore options to meet demand including:
  - Additional locations in other communities
  - Piggyback on existing or to-be-built facilities
  - Staffing needs
  - Leverage the Growth Management Planning Project

