



From Green Space to Digital Place

Factoring Parks & Recreation into
smart city strategies in 2018

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Executive summary

Smart city strategies are being developed across North America today, with cities and municipalities capitalizing on technological advances, the digital economy and evolving consumer engagement trends to drive innovation and solve metropolitan challenges.

While most cities will prioritize sectors such as public safety, waste water management, telecommunications, and transportation for the implementation of their smart city strategy, Parks & Recreation departments are often overlooked or misunderstood as a key area for investment.

Parks & Recreation (P&R) are the lifeblood of communities, often contributing to the wellbeing and attractiveness of a city. They include local arts programs, sports and activities, as well as arenas, outdoor playgrounds and parks, providing citizens with access to the facilities and services that they offer.

This report looks at public interest in P&R services, and attitudes towards smart P&R solutions in the U.S. and Canada. It reveals the demand and opportunity for better digital P&R services in re-engaging modern communities to boost usage, revenue and support; and summarizes the key findings of independent consumer research. The survey was conducted by The Nielsen Company, and commissioned by Paysafe, a global payment solutions provider, and Amilia, a leading community management software developer.

“62% of all respondents (Canada and U.S.) stated that green and open leisure spaces are essential in their choice of city.”



Bridging the P&R engagement gap

P&R services and facilities are important to residents. In fact, this study shows that it is part of a citizen’s decision-making process when choosing a location to settle down. In both Canada and the U.S., 62% of adults stated that P&R is an important factor in choosing a place to live.

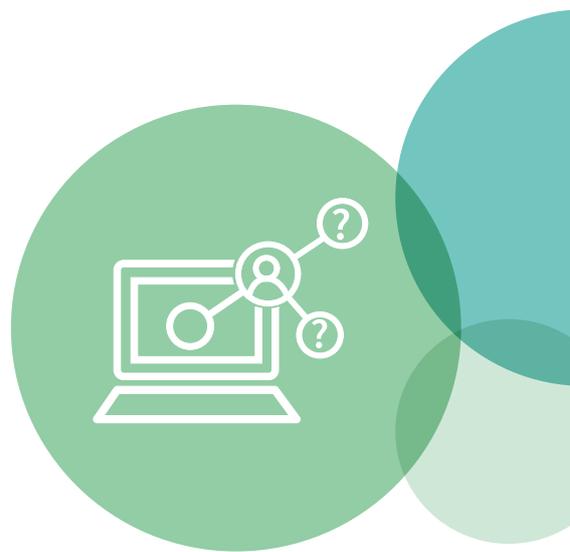
However, digital engagement with P&R still has some way to go. Given the high value they place on P&R, many residents are surprisingly uninformed about the availability of online P&R services, with roughly half of Canadians (55%) and Americans (48%) unaware if their community offers an online booking service that they can reserve P&R facilities with over the internet.

One of the main reasons for this is the lack of regular communication and [relevant communication channels](#) between P&R departments and residents. With consumer

behaviors shifting to always-on, on-demand communication, paired with continuous mobile social engagement, P&R departments need to adapt their communication processes and tactics with residents.

Considering that 46% of Americans surveyed and 25% of Canadian respondents prefer to book their P&R activities in advance, there is clearly an opportunity to drive an uplift of participation, engagement and revenue levels through digital P&R solutions.

“Roughly half of Canadians (55%) and Americans (48%) are unaware that they can book P&R facilities over the internet”



Enabling P&R usage to drive local economic growth

Throughout the study, a recurring theme emerged that may provide the key to enabling P&R departments to make the digital leap; the consumer experience and its alignment with P&R services.

In fact, during the survey, residents highlighted the key pain points that prevent them from using their local P&R services. These include the lack of communication from the city (18% in Canada, 22% in the U.S.), the lack of reminders for registration periods (14% in Canada, 17% in the U.S.) and registration hours (14% in Canada, 16% in U.S.).

When requested to select the most important services if their P&R department were to provide an online service, *registration for activities* emerges as the most expected web-attribute (53% in Canada, 51% in U.S.), followed by public directories of activities (42% in Canada, 44% in U.S.).

According to this study, there is therefore a clear opportunity to drive increased usage of facilities and services with close to half of residents (48% in Canada, 57% in U.S.) stating that they would start using their local P&R recreational facilities more if an online service was offered in their community. Hence, this in turn would encourage more investment into the community and drive more revenue for economic growth.

Top Five Barriers of Current Registration Process

Canada		USA	
 Lack of information	18%	 Lack of information	22%
 Activities at capacity quickly	18%	 Activities at capacity quickly	17%
 No reminders for registration	14%	 No reminders for registration	17%
 Registration hours	14%	 Registration hours	16%
 Inaccessible online systems	11%	 Payment methods	14%



Including payments in your smart city strategy

The way consumers pay and expect to transact has changed significantly in recent years. According to [recent data](#), attitudes towards buying and payment across North America are changing rapidly. Consumer behavior, particularly amongst 18 to 35-year-olds, shows a confidence in mobile shopping and a demand for multi-platform payment options. In order for businesses to succeed, they must offer choice, convenience, reach and flexibility in their payment solutions. The same applies to cities and municipalities.

According to [Lost in Transaction, Volume 1](#), one in four Canadians between the ages of 18 and 34, and one in five Americans aged between 56 and 64 state that they are [cash-free](#). It is no surprise that payments – and the lack of online payment options – is becoming a pain point for P&R users.

A weighted average of thirteen percent of residents (10% in Canada, 14% in U.S.) also stated that payment methods is one of the barriers in the current registration process for activities and classes. Hence, they would like to be given the option of selecting their preferred payment method. From credit to debit cards, to mobile and alternative payment methods, consumers are spoiled for choice when it comes to ecommerce and have come to expect the same level of omnichannel payment choice when using city services, including P&R facilities.



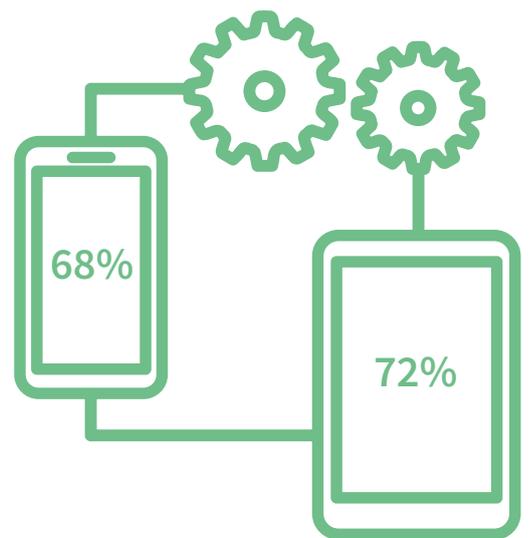
Putting the smart back into Rec

To fulfill convenience for today’s connected consumers, on-demand digital services can no longer be considered aspirational; they are now a prerequisite for P&R organizations to drive more usage. A number of platform solutions have been developed in recent years to fill this need, providing integrated solutions that offer online membership and registration management, online payments, centralized resource management and other data-driven tools.

When asked whether they find the prospect of a simple, integrated P&R software platform appealing, 68% of Canadians and 72% of Americans agreed. Of those who are aware that their local parks and recreational facilities provide an online booking and services management system, a weighted average of 78% (73% in Canada, 81% in U.S.) find the registration process

easy. In addition to this, when requested to select the most important services for online P&R software, ‘registration for activities’ emerges as the most important attribute (53% Canada, 51% U.S.), followed by public directories (42% Canada, 44% U.S.) and pay for activities/class fees (42% Canada, 37% U.S.) amongst all surveyed.

“68% of Canadians and 72% of Americans find the prospect of a simple, integrated P&R software platform, like Amilia, appealing.”



Conclusion: Setting the stage for “SmartRec” in 2018 and beyond

Cities across North America are seeking ways to transform their increasingly congested landscapes into safer, smarter, and healthier environments that better serve their residents. At the same time, consumers have shifted their habits to digital, always-on, on-demand services and residents have therefore come to which they expect to extend to their city services. Today’s residents therefore expect a seamless experience between their daily tools and their city services, including P&R facilities which they are interested in engaging with more via digital connected platforms.

With the smart cities market anticipated to surpass U.S. \$ 1 Tn in 2019, there is clear opportunity for P&R to take its place among the new digital ecosystem and fulfill the smart city promise in 2018. By deploying smart P&R strategies, cities not only offer more residents greater choice and accessibility to their services and facilities, but the potential uplift in usage of P&R services and facilities could drive revenue which can be reinvested into the city to drive local economic growth.

This opportunity could be fulfilled with an end-to-end customized P&R solution – such as that proposed by Amilia’s SmartRec platform, powered by Paysafe – which would extend the availability of P&R services and make them more readily available to wider audience segments. Customized P&R software can include personalized messages to end users, Customer Relationship Management tools, inventory management systems, maintenance of profiles, online payments, activity booking and scheduling as well as registration, membership, loyalty programs and more.



About the Report

This survey was conducted online in the United States (New York, Texas, California, Illinois, Washington, Massachusetts) and Canada (Quebec, Ontario, Alberta, British Columbia) by The Nielsen Company, an independent and world leading authority in consumer insight on behalf of Paysafe. The survey was conducted from September 5 – 15 2017, among 1,240 respondents in Canada and 1,888 respondents in United States, ages 18 and older, and must have access to internet or cellular data. The study covered topics around barriers to using P&R services and how a digital platform would impact their P&R engagement and usage among other information areas. For complete survey method, including weighting variables and subgroup sample sizes, please contact Paysafe at: smartrec@paysafe.com
Amilia at: alexandre.gauthier@amilia.com

About Paysafe

Paysafe is a leading global provider of end-to-end payment solutions. Our core purpose is to enable businesses and consumers to connect and transact seamlessly through our industry-leading capabilities in payment processing, digital wallets and online cash solutions. Delivered through an integrated platform, our solutions are geared towards mobile-initiated transactions, real-time analytics and the convergence between bricks-and-mortar and online payments. With over 20 years of online payment experience, a combined transactional volume of U.S. \$48 billion in 2016 and over 2,300 staff located in 12 global locations, Paysafe connects businesses and consumers across 200 payment types in over 40 currencies around the world. Paysafe Group plc shares trade on the London Stock Exchange under the symbol (PAYS.L). For more information, please visit:

www.paysafe.com

About Amilia

Amilia is a Canadian company that offers a State-of-the-art Recreation Management and Registration Software that integrates with the Smart City ecosystem. Our core purpose is to empower local communities to unleash their potential through e-commerce. More than 450,000 people in Canada and the United States, and over 600 organizations, use Amilia's SaaS solution to keep track of all their operations in one place. For more information, please visit: www.amilia.com

