

2019 Northwest Ottawa County Park and Recreation Community Survey Analysis & Report



Grand Haven
Coast Guard City USA



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Executive Summary

The Frost Research Center contracted with five North Ottawa Recreation Divisions (City of Grand Haven, Grand Haven Charter Township, City of Ferrysburg, Village of Spring Lake, and Spring Lake Township) to obtain the



“One of the main attractions to live in Ottawa County for us is the bike paths! We love them and use them, as well as the parks system every single week!”
—Grand Haven Township

opinions of community residents on existing programs, park facilities, and future priorities to inform the upcoming Five-Year Plan.

Community surveys were implemented with 835 residents through online (721) and phone (114) surveys in September and October 2019. Further in-depth stakeholder surveys were conducted with advocates/program staff representing aging adults, residents with disabilities and coaches/program staff. The key take-away of these community-wide surveys across all five municipalities are summarized.

Survey respondents indicated:

- They visited Grand Haven State Park most often. In each municipality respondents specified visiting the following city parks most frequently: Coast Guard Park (Ferrysburg), Chinook Pier Park (City of Grand Haven), Pottawattomie Park (Grand Haven Charter Township), Rycenga Park (Spring Lake Township), and Mill Point Park (Village of Spring Lake).
- Natural areas (38%) and location (28%) are the **biggest factors** impacting respondents’ decisions to visit a park in the last year across all municipalities.
- Weather (41.1%), not having time (37.7%), and getting exercise and recreation through other outlets (10.3%) are listed as the **top three reasons residents do not go to parks when their usual routine of going to a park is interrupted.**
- Driving continues to be the **primary method (79%) of transportation used to get to the parks.**
- Picking up trash (29%), removing invasive species (18%), and “Adopt a Pathway” (17%) are the **volunteer opportunities** in which respondents are most interested.
- **13.4%** of respondents noted they or a household member have a **disability or condition** that makes it difficult to enjoy public spaces – of this population, 93% of respondents their disability limited mobility.
- Of those that indicated a disability in their family, respondents indicated social activities (28%) and outdoor adventure programs (23%) are most needed to serve this population.
- Nearly one fifth (18.7%) of respondents reported **using a stroller, wagon or other types of equipment that may present challenges at parks.** Many of these respondents suggested more paved or hard-surface walkways free of roots and other obstacles.

“We moved here from Western New York State three years ago and just love it here! We [have] been to many of the parks on this list already, but now we have seen that there are many more to go!... Thank you for taking such good care of all these natural areas. We love it here!”
—Grand Haven Township

Park Amenities and Updates

- Respondents indicated that “nature trails for hiking,” “paved walking / biking trails,” “beach/swimming access,” and “picnic facilities,” are the most important park amenities.

- When asked about the **most needed park outdoor facilities**, “nature trails for hiking (39.2%),” “paved walking and biking paths (non-motorized) (29.2%),” “updated bathroom facilities, (26.0%)” and “beach/swimming access (21.1%)” are most often selected.
- Updated bathroom facilities (46.7%), drinking fountains (25.5%), more shaded areas (20.1%), and wildflower fields (18.1%) were most often selected as the **most needed park updates**.
- Respondents are most interested in purchasing more land for parks and adding more programs and upgrades to current parks as opposed to adding more active or passive recreational facilities.

Conclusion and Final Comments

- Final comments from respondents offered **mostly praise** (86) for the municipal park systems. Other suggestions focused on **maintaining current park offerings and amenities** (29) and winter **upkeep of trails** (21).
- Continuing to involve residents through **volunteering** and **decision making** is worthwhile and appreciated.
- Residents indicated that **maintaining natural areas** is the most important to them and should be a focus area of the five year plan.
- It is clear that Northwest Ottawa County parks has made great efforts to make their parks **accessible**; however, there areas of opportunity to allow greater access to trails, playgrounds, and bathrooms.
- **Updating existing facilities and park amenities and facilities**—particularly bathrooms, trails (nature, paved, bike/mountain bike), expanding beach access/finishing sections of bike trails that are dangerous, and **maintaining the current parks** are themes that resonate across the municipalities for future efforts.

Introduction

The Frost Research Center contracted with the North Ottawa Recreation Divisions (City of Grand Haven, Grand Haven Charter

"I love our parks. We are blessed with the planning and care." –*Spring Lake Township Resident*

Township, City of Ferrysburg, Village of Spring Lake, and Spring Lake Township) in

obtaining the opinions of community residents on existing programs, park facilities, and future priorities to inform the next Five-Year Plan. As partners in this work, the Frost Center worked alongside the

leadership of the five municipalities throughout the project. Together, the Frost Center and the North Ottawa leadership team developed a community survey instrument that was implemented through a multi-pronged approach to collect rich, meaningful and representative data on how residents would like to use and grow North Ottawa's park and recreation assets. This approach included online and telephone surveys as well as a series of three stakeholder surveys to residents and advocates having a unique perspective on park and recreation planning (disabilities, aging residents, and coaches/park staff). Surveys were collected in September and October, 2019.



Methodology

Both phone and online surveys were administered to the five municipalities to gather residents opinions about future planning for the parks and recreation in the region. Telephone numbers, both cell and landline, were purchased from a third party vendor using the most up-to-date sampling technology available. Calls were made by trained Frost Center interviewers (Hope College students) Monday through Thursday and on Saturdays for approximately three weeks. Each phone number was called four times or until a respondent completed the survey or choose not to participate. Telephone surveys were more difficult to obtain. Online surveys were sent through email lists to three of the five municipalities. The other two municipalities posted the survey link on their city's Facebook page to recruit online responses. While telephone surveys overall did not reach the overall goal of 200 completed responses, the overall goal of 500 completed surveys was exceeded. There were multiple functions built into the survey to detect duplicate responses, including resident address and computer IP address. The table below outlines the number of surveys completed by region. Based on a response of 835 surveys for a population of 45,105 residents in the five municipalities, a confidence interval of $\pm 3.36\%$ can be assumed.

	Survey completion goal	Telephone Surveys	Online Surveys	All Surveys
City of Ferrysburg	30	29	10	39
City of Grand Haven	115	49	64	113
Grand Haven Charter Township	170	12	360	372
Spring Lake Township	160	22	229	251
Village of Spring Lake	25	6	54	60
Total	500	114	721	835

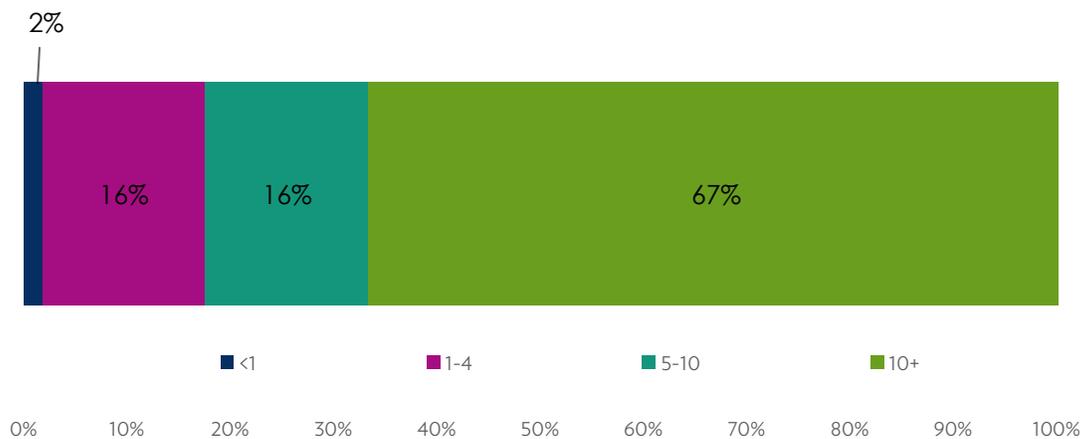
Stakeholder surveys were sent out to three different groups identified by the leadership of the municipalities. In addition, each of the contacts provided for each stakeholder group was encouraged to share the survey with others within their organization or advocacy/program area. The stakeholder survey findings are attached in an a report appendix. The disability stakeholder survey also aimed to collect responses from members of the community who indicated they/member of their family had a disability and they would be willing to take an additional survey about park accessibility. They were emailed a follow up survey.

Survey Results

Length of Residence

The majority (67%) of survey respondents have lived in the region more than 10 years, with only 18% living in the area less than four years. Distributions from all five communities look similarly yet respondents from Ferrysburg and Grand Haven Township reported a slightly greater percentage of long-standing residents (71.8% and 70.1%, respectively).

How many years have you been a resident of Northwest Ottawa County?



	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
< 1 Year	2 (5.1%)	--	7 (1.9%)	4 (1.6%)	2 (3.3%)	15 (1.8%)
1-4 Years	3 (7.7%)	21 (18.6%)	56 (15.1%)	41 (16.4%)	11 (18.3%)	132 (15.8%)
5-10 Years	6 (15.4%)	18 (15.9%)	48 (12.9%)	43 (17.2%)	10 (16.7%)	125 (15.0%)
10 + Years	28 (71.8%)	74 (65.5%)	260 (70.1%)	162 (64.8%)	37 (61.7%)	561 (67.3%)

Most Visited Parks

Respondents at large reported visiting Grand Haven State Park, Chinook Pier Park, Coast Guard Park, and City Beach Park most frequently. Respondents were least likely to have visited Shiawassee Access and Klaver Park.

Which parks have you visited in the last twelve months?



The tables below outline parks survey respondents indicated they visited in the past year by municipality. In each municipality respondents indicated visiting the following city parks the most frequently: Coast Guard Park (Ferrysburg), Chinook Pier Park (City of Grand Haven), Pottawattomie Park (Grand Haven Charter Township), Rycenga Park (Spring Lake Township), and Mill Point Park (Village of Spring Lake).

City of Ferrysburg	
Coast Guard Park	461 (55.2%)
Mike Herman Memorial Field	38 (4.6%)
Ferrysburg Nature Preserve	109 (13.1%)
Ottawa Sands	25 (35.3%)
Fire Barn Park	58 (6.9%)
Sunnyside Park	35 (4.2%)
North Beach Park	420 (50.3%)
William Ferry Park	122 (14.6%)
North Ottawa Dunes	253 (30.3%)
Waterfront Street Ends	68 (8.1%)
Kitchel-Linquist-Hartger Dunes Preserve	147 (17.6%)

City of Grand Haven	
Bicentennial Park	208 (24.9%)
Bolt Park	160 (19.2%)
Central Park	428 (51.3%)
Chinook Pier Park	476 (57.0%)
Duncan Woods Park	331 (39.6%)
City Beach Park	457 (54.7%)
East Grand River Park	131 (15.7%)
Escanaba Park	202 (24.2%)
Harbor Island and Launch	269 (32.2%)
William Hatton Park	31 (3.7%)
Lighthouse Connector Park/Boardwalk	423 (50.7%)
Johnston Park	22 (2.6%)
Klaver Park	16 (1.9%)
Klempel Park	22 (2.6%)
Lynne Sherwood Waterfront Stadium	452 (54.1%)
Mulligan's Hollow	452 (54.1%)
North Shore Fisherman's Parking Lot	293 (35.1%)
Sluka Field	122 (14.6%)
Grand Haven State Park	604 (72.3%)
Riverside Park	114 (13.7%)
Rosy Mound Natural Area	425 (50.9%)
Non-motorized trails	129 (15.4%)

Grand Haven Township	
152 nd Access	63 (7.5%)
Bignell Access	32 (3.8%)
Brucker Access	92 (11.0%)
Buchanan Access	112 (13.4%)
Hofma Preserve	301 (36.0%)
Hofma Park	336 (40.2%)
Mercury Park	127 (15.2%)
Odawa/Battle Point Boat Launch	95 (11.4%)
Pottawattomie Park	355 (42.5%)
Shiawassee Access	17 (2.0%)
Non-motorized trails	135 (16.2%)

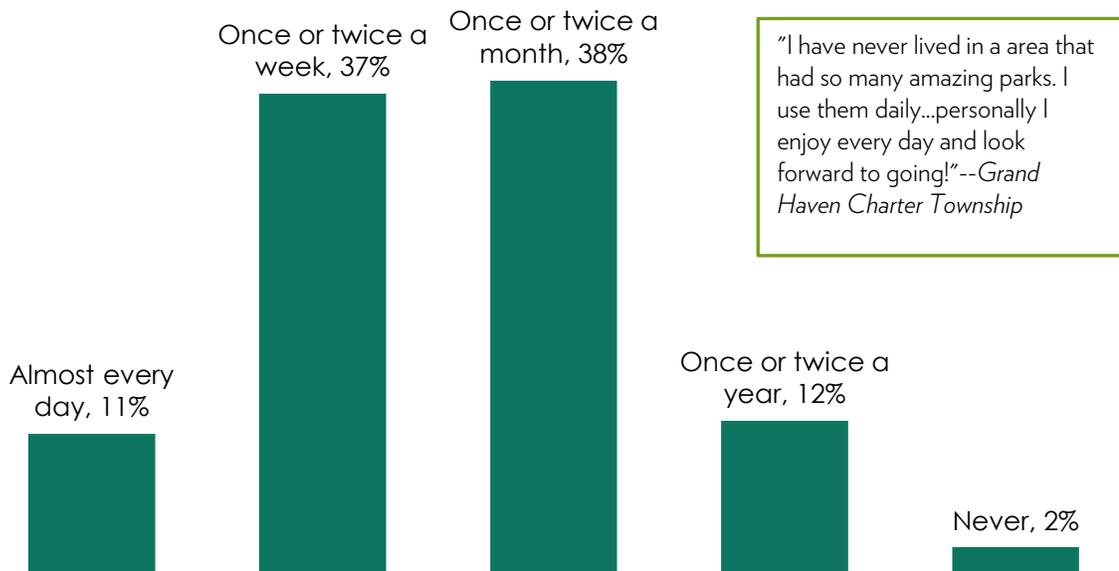
Spring Lake Township	
Black Lake Park	51 (6.1%)
Rycenga Park	227 (27.2%)
River Run Park	61 (7.3%)
Water Tower Park	52 (6.2%)
Non-motorized trails	156 (18.7%)

Village of Spring Lake	
N Buchanan Street End	30 (3.6%)
Central Park	285 (34.1%)
Cutler Street Kayak Launch	39 (4.7%)
N Division Street End	28 (3.4%)
Jackson St Dock	30 (3.6%)
Lakeside Beach	136 (16.3%)
Lakeside Trail	164 (19.6%)
Mill Point Park	348 (41.7%)
Parkhurst Street End	23 (2.8%)
Tanglefoot Park	90 (10.8%)
Whistle Stop Playground	148 (17.7%)

Visit Frequency

Overall, the residents surveyed are frequent users of local parks. Almost half, (47.9%) of residents surveyed visit a park at least once or twice a week, and 10.9% of the group visit almost every day. The open-ended remarks support these data—the community love, use and support the local parks on a regular basis. In 2014, these respondents reported even higher percentages on this question—with 16.45% reporting they go almost every day and 48.7% reporting they go every day. However, the 2014 data, (not collected by the Frost Center), but shared with us, was more likely to contain bias towards those visiting parks (a convenience sample). This year’s sample, while it may contain some bias from email lists and Facebook solicitation, did contain a random sample of phone participants and careful methods to detect duplicate entries/prevent ballot stuffing. Either way, both years demonstrate a high and frequent use of respondents’ park usage.

How often do you visit a local park?



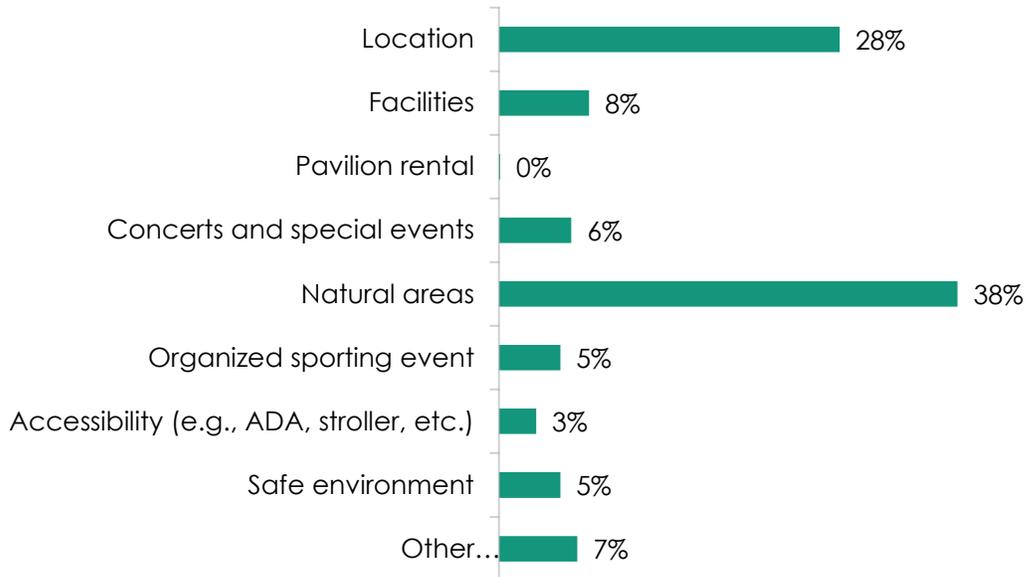
	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Almost every day	6 (16.7%)	13 (11.6%)	33 (8.9%)	29 (11.7%)	9 (15.3%)	90 (10.9%)
Once or twice a week	17 (47.2%)	47 (42.0%)	164 (44.2%)	91 (36.7%)	29 (49.2%)	306 (37.0%)
Once or twice a month	9 (25.0%)	39 (34.8%)	45 (12.1%)	87 (35.1%)	15 (25.4%)	314 (38.0%)
Once or twice a year	4 (11.1%)	11 (9.8%)	7 (1.9%)	33 (13.3%)	5 (8.5%)	98 (11.9%)
Never	0 (0.0%)	2 (1.8%)	7 (1.9%)	8 (3.2%)	1 (1.7%)	18 (2.2%)

Reasons for Visit

The most common reason respondents visited a park was the natural areas (38%) and the location (28%). Other responses listed for 'other' included dog friendly (8), exercise (8), boat launch (3), kid friendly (3), pickleball (3), and smaller crowds (2).

	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	Spring Lake	SLT	All
Location	11 (31.4%)	29 (26.6%)	107 (29.6%)	66 (27.6%)	15 (25.9%)	228 (28.4%)
Facilities	2 (5.7%)	13 (11.9%)	23 (6.4%)	20 (8.4%)	2 (3.4%)	60 (7.5%)
Pavilion rental	--	--	1 (.3%)	--	--	1 (0.1%)
Special events	--	5 (4.6%)	20 (5.5%)	17 (7.1%)	17 (7.1%)	48 (6.0%)
Natural areas	16(45.7%)	40 (36.7%)	142 (39.2%)	88 (36.8%)	88 (36.8%)	306 (38.1%)
Sporting event	1 (2.9%)	3 (2.8%)	23 (6.4%)	14 (5.9%)	14 (5.9%)	42 (5.2%)
Accessibility	1 (2.9%)	4 (3.7%)	9 (2.5%)	7 (2.9%)	7 (2.9%)	25 (3.1%)
Safe environment	2 (5.7%)	4 (3.7%)	14 (3.9%)	16 (6.7%)	16 (6.7%)	41 (5.1%)
Other	2 (5.7%)	11 (10.1%)	23 (6.4%)	11 (4.6%)	11 (4.6%)	52 (6.5%)

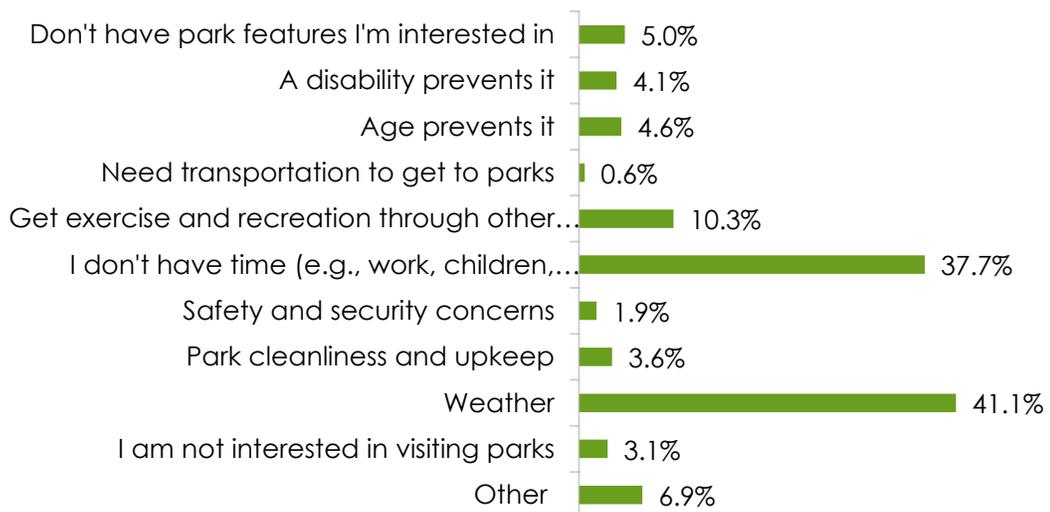
Which of the following is the biggest factor impacting your decision to visit a park in...



Reasons for not Visiting Park

Weather (41.1%) and a lack of time (37.7%) are the primary reasons that community members do not visit a park, or their regular visiting routines are interrupted. Transportation does not appear to be a major obstacle to park visits as only .6% of respondents specified this as a reason for not going. Other responses listed for 'other' included not being able to take one's dog (5), crowds (4), cost (2), and lack of/cost of parking (2).

If you don't go to a park often or when your typical routine of visiting the parks is interrupted, what are the reasons for not going? (select all that apply)

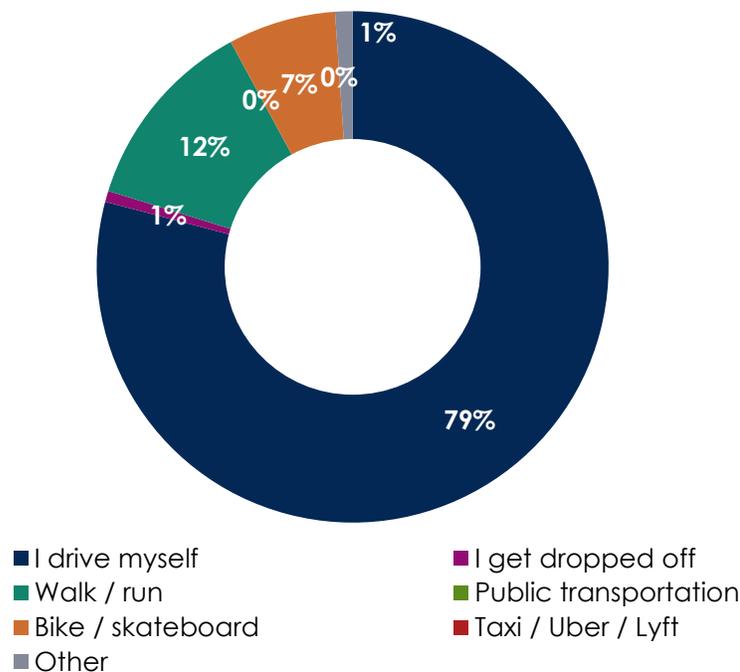


	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Don't have features I'm interested in	1 (2.6%)	4 (3.5%)	27 (7.3%)	8 (3.2%)	2 (3.3%)	42 (5.0%)
A disability prevents it	--	2 (1.8%)	20 (5.4%)	10 (4.0%)	2 (3.3%)	34 (4.1%)
Age prevents it	2 (5.1%)	5 (4.4%)	17 (4.6%)	11 (4.4%)	3 (5.0%)	38 (4.6%)
Need transportation to get to parks	1 (2.6%)	1 (0.9%)	2 (0.5%)	--	1 (1.67%)	5 (0.6%)
Get exercise through other sources	2 (5.1%)	4 (3.5%)	46 (12.4%)	28 (11.2%)	6 (10.0%)	86 (10.3%)
I don't have time	10 (25.5%)	50 (44.3%)	135 (36.3%)	102 (40.6%)	18 (30.0%)	315 (37.7%)
Safety and security concerns	1 (2.6%)	3 (2.7%)	7 (1.9%)	3 (1.2%)	2 (3.3%)	16 (1.9%)
Park cleanliness and upkeep	--	2 (1.8%)	12 (3.2%)	10 (4.0%)	6 (10.0%)	30 (3.6%)
Weather	12 (30.8%)	54 (47.8%)	159 (42.7%)	99 (39.4%)	19 (31.7%)	343 (41.1%)

Transportation

Driving continues to be the main transportation to the parks. 79% of respondents reported this as their primary method for getting to the parks. In 2014, 67% of respondents indicated they use driving most often. Respondents from the Village of Spring Lake and Ferrysburg were less likely than the City of Grand Haven, Grand Haven Township, and Spring Lake Township to report driving as their primary means of transportation to the parks.

What mode of transportation do you most often use to travel to a park?

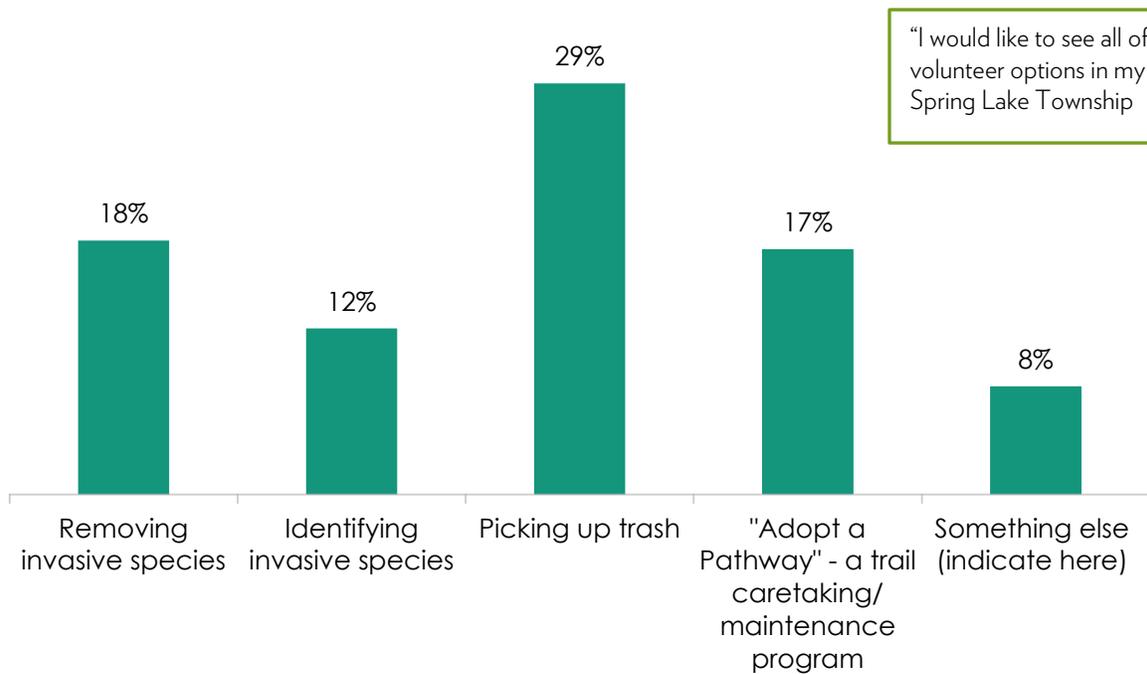


	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
I drive myself	21 (60.0%)	82 (73.2%)	322 (88.5%)	185 (75.5%)	34 (58.6%)	644 (79.1%)
I get dropped off	--	1 (1%)	3 (1%)	1 (.5%)	1 (1.7%)	6 (.7%)
Walk / run	11 (31.4%)	20 (17.9%)	19 (5.2%)	37 (15.1%)	13 (22.4%)	100 (12.3%)
Public transportation	--	--	--	--	--	--
Bike / skateboard	2 (5.7%)	5 (4.5%)	18 (4.9%)	21 (8.6%)	9 (15.5%)	55 (6.8%)
Taxi / Uber / Lyft	--	--	--	--	--	--
Other	1 (2.9%)	4 (3.6%)	2 (.5%)	1 (.4%)	1 (1.7%)	9 (1.1%)

Volunteer Opportunities

Survey respondents most frequently reported their interest in helping to pick up trash (29%) as well as removing invasive species (18%) and partaking in a trail caretaking / maintenance program (17%). Residents of Ferrysburg were more likely to volunteer for all potential opportunities than average.

Would you, or a group you belong to, be interested in the following volunteer opportunities? (select all that apply)



	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Removing invasive species	10 (25.6%)	22 (19.5%)	59 (15.9%)	43 (17.1%)	13 (21.7%)	147 (17.6%)
Identifying invasive species	5 (12.8%)	14 (12.4%)	40 (10.8%)	26 (10.4%)	11 (18.3%)	96 (11.5%)
Picking up trash	14 (35.9%)	42 (37.2%)	91 (24.5%)	75 (29.9%)	16 (26.7%)	238 (28.5%)
"Adopt a Pathway" program	8 (20.5%)	18 (15.9%)	54 (14.5%)	47 (18.7%)	15 (25.0%)	142 (17.0%)
Something else	3 (7.7%)	18 (15.9%)	18 (4.8%)	18 (7.2%)	6 (10.0%)	63 (7.5%)

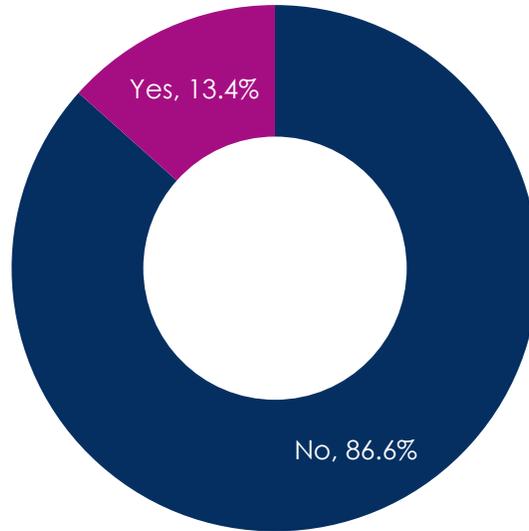
There was a wide variety of ideas shared by residents to utilize local volunteers, including:

- Bike path repair & maintenance, including building and maintaining mountain bike trails
- Utilizing Boy Scouts and Girls in projects
- Conducting frog or bird counts or work to save the Monarchs
- Recruiting groups (maybe church groups) to focus on specific projects such as building handicap service swings, update/add restrooms at Mulligans Hollow, or add signage to trails
- Hosting hiking events for families through local schools or toddler events at Hemlock Crossing
- Participating in alternative transportation to enhance the access to parks
- Involving residents in local planning efforts
- Using volunteering for planting and reforestation
- Trail building, development, and maintenance
- Advocacy efforts, such as trying to persuade GR water treatment plant to grant MUCH needed beach access at the end of Lake Michigan Drive.

Disability / Accessibility Concerns

Thirteen percent (13.4%) of respondents indicated either experiencing a disability themselves or having a household member with a disability or condition that makes it difficult to enjoy public spaces. A slightly higher percentage of respondents with a disability in the household lived in Ferrysburg and Grand Haven. A similar question was asked in 2014 with 9% of the respondents reporting a disability.

It is a goal to strive to make each park as barrier-free/ADA accessible as possible for the convenience and enjoyment of visitors with disabilities. Do you or a household member have a disability or condition that makes it challenging to enjoy public spaces?



Disability	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Yes	6 (16.7%)	19 (17.0%)	49 (13.4%)	27 (10.9%)	9 (15.3%)	110 (13.4%)
No	30 (83.3%)	93 (83.0%)	317 (86.6%)	221 (89.1%)	50 (84.7%)	711 (86.6%)

Disability Type

Of those that indicated a disability, 93% of respondents reported their or a household member’s disability affects mobility. Of those stating “other”, they explained it was either cognitive, a combination of age and disability, or sensory related.

Please indicate the type of disability or condition (Check all that apply):

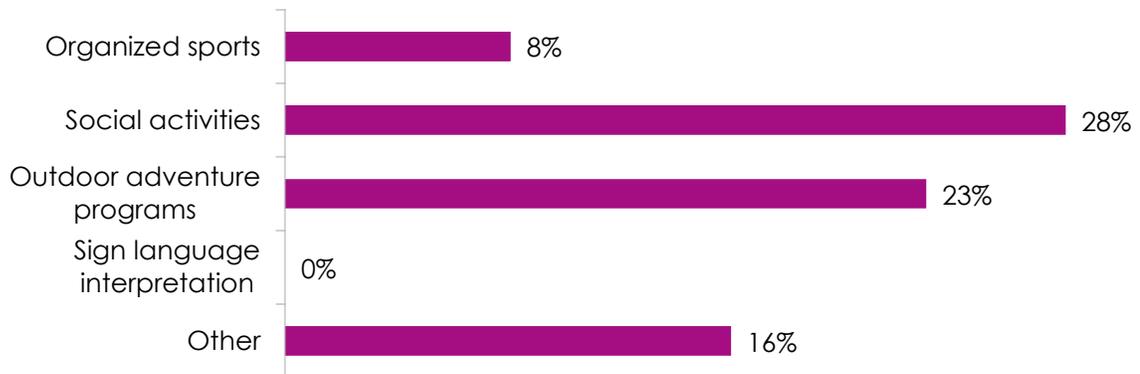


Disability	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Mobility	4 (66.7%)	18 (94.7%)	45 (91.8%)	26 (96.3%)	9 (100%)	102 (92.7%)
Visual	1 (16.7%)	-	4 (8.2%)	1 (3.7%)	-	6 (5.5%)
Hearing	1 (16.7%)	1 (5.3%)	4 (8.2%)	-	1 (11.1%)	7 (6.4%)
Other	2 (33.3%)	1 (5.3%)	6 (12.2%)	1 (3.7%)	-	10 (9.1%)

Programs for those with Disabilities

Respondents reporting disabilities in the household are most interested in social activities (28%) or outdoor adventure programs (23%). Municipality breakouts are varied but this volatility is most likely due to the relatively small number of respondents in these groups.

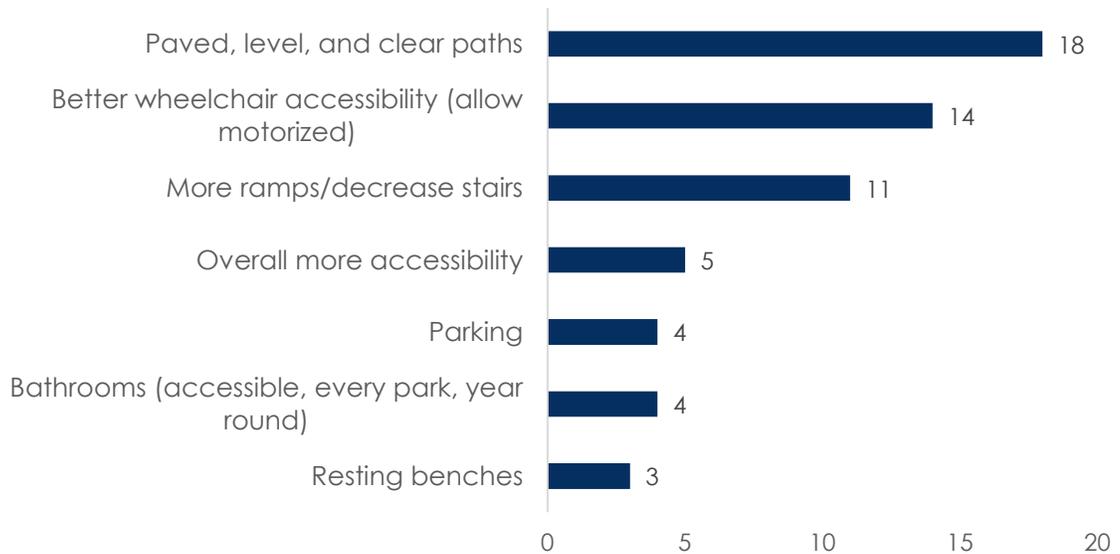
What types of programs are needed to serve people with disabilities in your family? (Check all that apply)



Programming	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Organized sports	1 (16.6%)	1 (5.2%)	6 (12.2%)	--	1 (11.1%)	9 (8.2%)
Social activities	--	3 (15.7%)	16 (32.6%)	9 (33.3%)	3 (33.3%)	31 (28.1%)
Outdoor adventure	1 (16.6%)	3 (15.7%)	14 (28.6%)	2 (7.4%)	5 (55.5%)	25 (22.7%)
Sign language	-	-	-	-	-	-
Other	2 (33.3%)	5 (26.3%)	6 (12.2%)	3 (11.1%)	2 (22.2%)	18 (16.4%)

Park Updates for Residents with Disabilities

What updates need to be done at your local park so that people with disabilities in your family can fully engage and use the park facilities? (n=45)



Respondents were asked to explain what could be updated at the park so that members of their family could more fully engage. The chart above captures that the most frequent updates mentioned was ensuring paths were paved, clear of ice and debris, and level to ensure wheel chairs, walkers, canes, and walkers could more easily access them. Other items mentioned that are not in the chart below were handrails, ensuring dogs are on leashes, resting benches, having paths to picnic tables, playgrounds with access for ALL, and continued maintenance to ensure equipment and facilities are accessible.

A few of the specific suggestions and quotations shared by respondents included:

Our Granddaughter visits us frequently and she has a severe disability. We would like to be able to go on trails but they are not accessible by wheelchair. --Village of Spring Lake Resident

Our local parks need to be not only for the young and active, but also for the seniors of the area. Sometimes activities which many people enjoy place those with disabilities, and/or

seniors at risk of injury...would it be too much for a few sections be reserved for just enjoying nature? Maybe even permitting motorized wheelchairs and providing signs that indicate such, only for motorized accessible vehicles.” Village of Spring Lake Resident

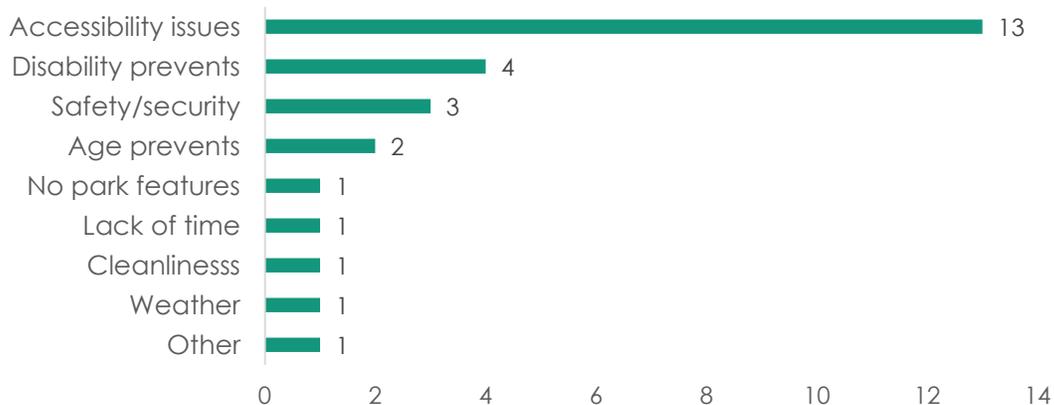
There needs to be some sort of restroom at all facilities. Grand Haven Charter Township Resident

Our daughter is mildly CP, but mobile. Paved trails would be beneficial for wheelchair bound citizens. Grand Haven Charter Township Resident

Survey respondents taking the community survey were asked to indicate if they or a household member had a disability that made it challenging to use parks or public spaces. As a follow-up, they were then asked if they would be willing to answer an additional survey about park access. Seventeen respondents from all five municipalities answered these questions, summarized below:

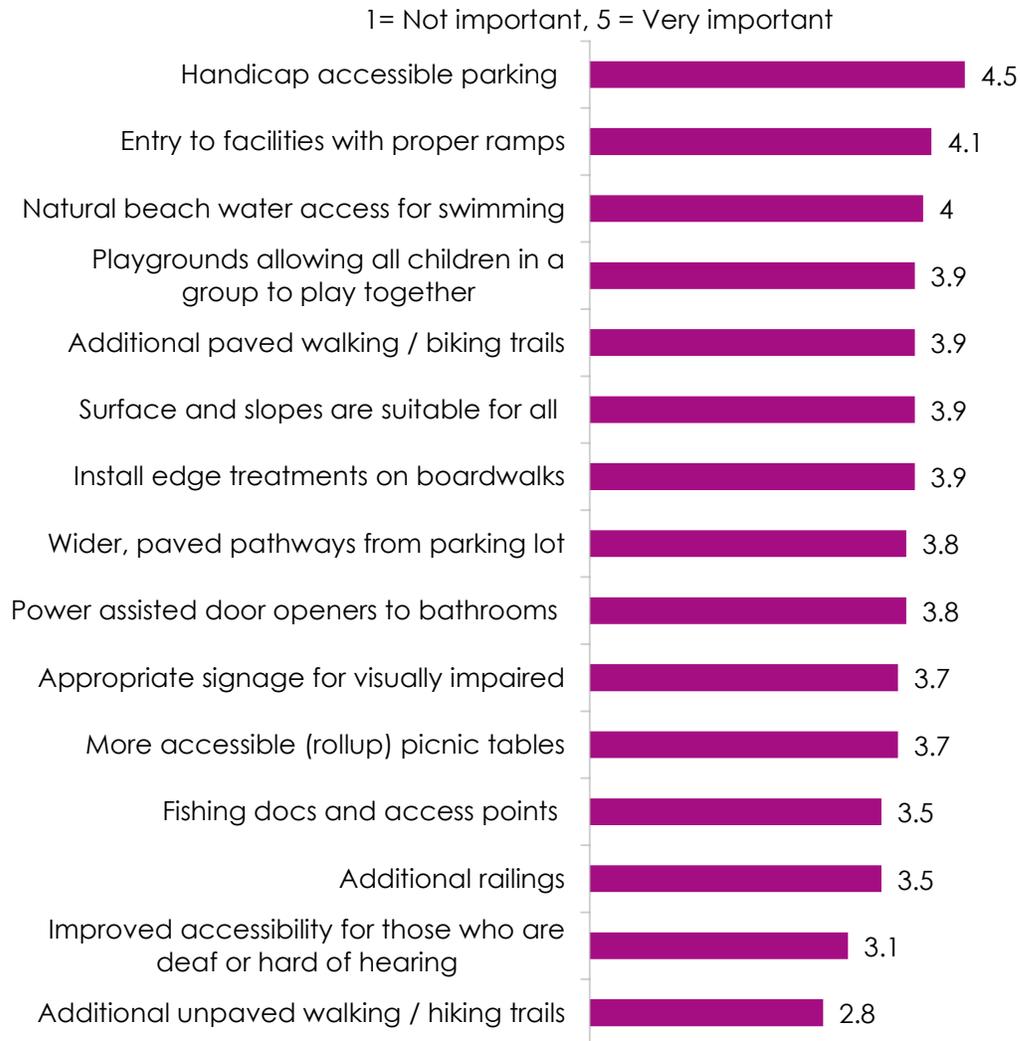
Ferrysburg	1
City of Grand Haven	3
Grand Haven Charter Township	10
Spring Lake Township	2
Village of Spring Lake	1
Total	17

What are the typical reasons you/a household member with disabilities may not visit a park? (n=17)



Accessibility issues was mentioned by 13 (76%) of the respondents taking the survey as a reason they may not visit a park. No one selected needing transportation, getting exercise elsewhere, or a lack of interest as a reason for not visiting a park.

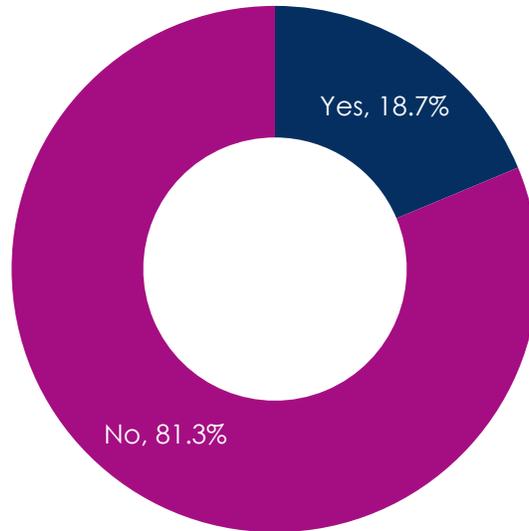
Please rate the importance of the following items to improve accessibility for residents with disabilities within local parks. (n=17)



Stroller / Wagon / Equipment Usage

Nearly one fifth (18.7%) of respondents reported using a stroller, wagon or other types of equipment that may present challenges at parks. Responding residents from Ferrysburg (27.3%) and the Village of Spring Lake (23.2%) were more likely to report using this type of equipment than other communities.

Do you or a household member use items such as strollers, wagons or other types of equipment at parks that may present challenges with barriers at parks?



Stroller / Wagons	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Yes	9 (27.3%)	22 (19.6%)	65 (18.1%)	42 (17.1%)	13 (23.2%)	151 (18.7%)
No	24 (72.7%)	90 (8.4%)	294 (81.9%)	204 (82.9%)	43 (76.8%)	655 (81.3%)

Suggestions for Parks with use of Equipment

What suggestion do you have for improving your experience at the park with a stroller, wagon, etc. ?

Many survey respondents using strollers or wagons at local parks provided feedback for ways that their experience could be improved. The primary suggestion (22) was ensuring that walkways and sidewalks were paved with a hard surface and connected to one another. For example, the walkway from the parking lot to the playground was one continuous paved, hard surface, path. Many respondents also indicated (14) the importance of ensuring the pathways remain clear and level. Sand, snow, and tree roots make it difficult to navigate. Additional suggestions include adding additional ramps at curbs and each of the stairways (8), and adding more paved paths/ramps to water (6). There were a few parks mentioned that were specifically well suited for strollers (State Park, North Shore, Kirk, Hofma) but respondents mentioned that it



“We typically look for parks with paved paths for our little ones, or places where stroller accessibility is easy for playgrounds.”
 -- Resident, Grand Haven Charter Township

would be good if more were well suited for stroller access as well. Several mentioned that they feel they are “in the way” when they have their strollers, and they block the path.

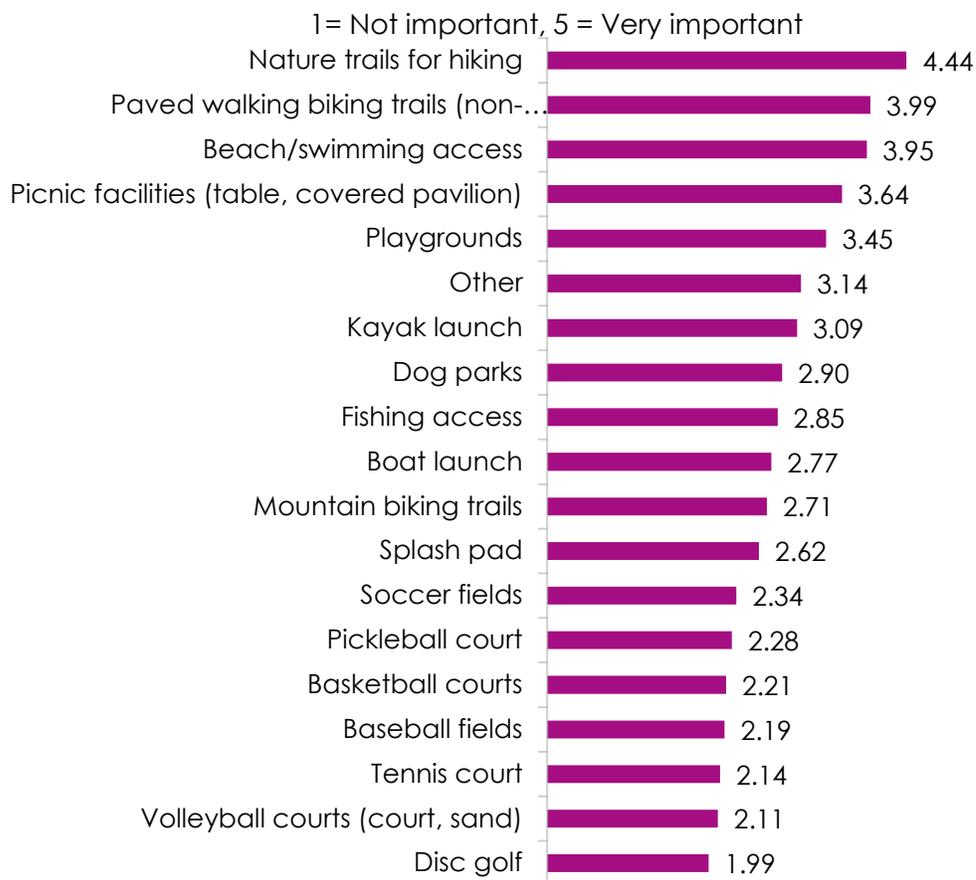
Importance of Park Amenities

Respondents indicated that nature trails for hiking, paved walking / biking trails, beach / swimming access, and picnic facilities, are the most important park amenities. Disc golf, volleyball courts, and tennis courts rated as least important. There was some themes but also variation when dividing this data by community and age of respondent. For instance playgrounds are more important to respondents of typical parent and grandparent age whereas swimming / beach access falls in importance for residents 80 and older.

The next set of questions will ask you about your satisfaction with your local parks and what improvements you would like to see in the next five years.



When imagining the facilities available through community parks and recreation, how important are the following amenities to you (or members of your family)....



Other: Additional amenities written in by survey respondents for this item by at least two respondents included: updated bathroom facilities (13), dog restrictions/more fenced in areas (4), ice rink/hockey rink (4), drinking fountains (3), community pool (3), trail markers (2), winter sports (2), camping (2), hunting (2), open space (2), and accessibility (2).

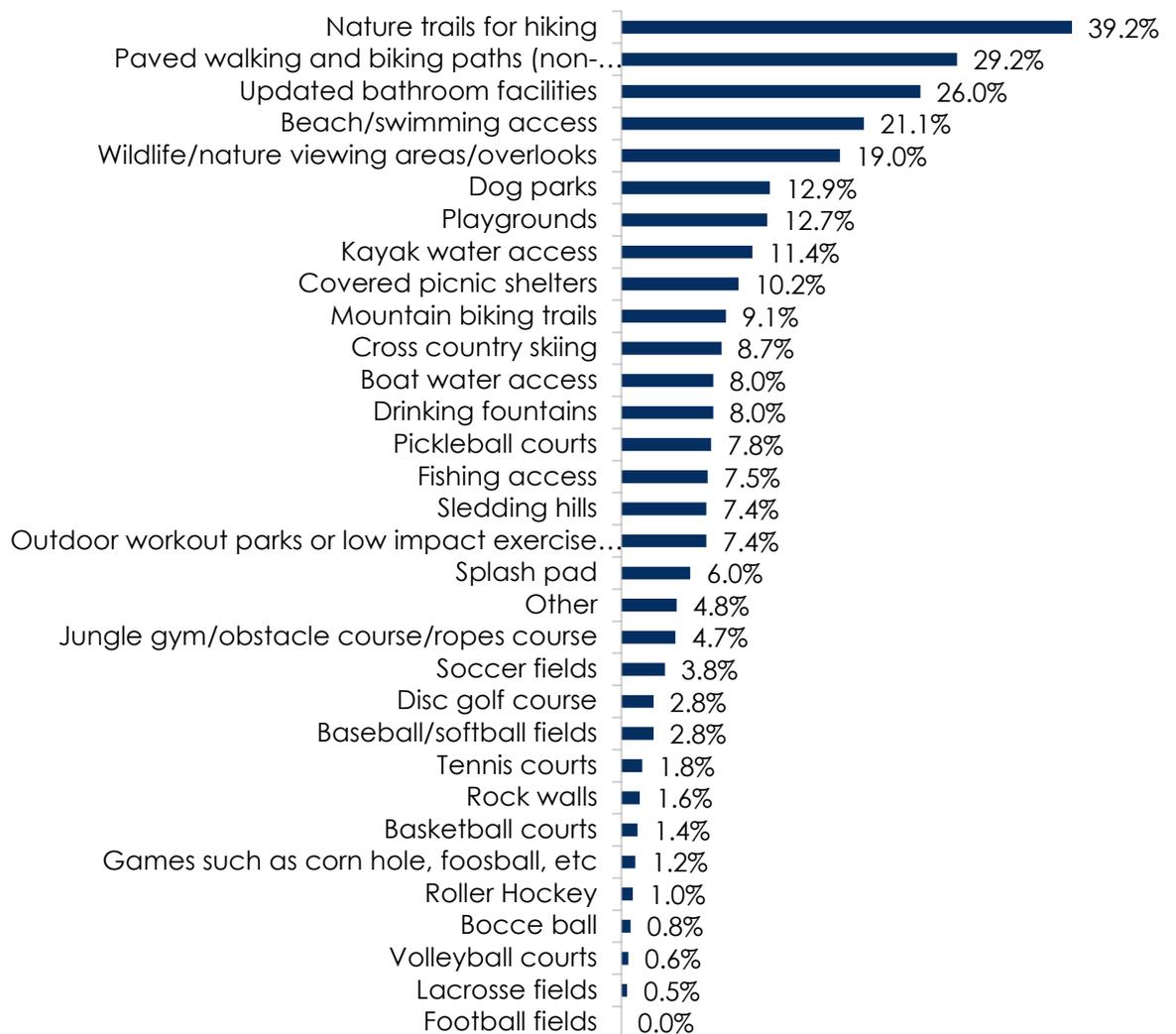
Average Importance	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Baseball fields	2.06	2.33	2.19	2.08	2.51	2.19
Basketball courts	2.41	2.49	2.11	2.18	2.31	2.21
Beach/swimming access	3.85	4.22	3.92	3.90	3.87	3.95
Boat launch	2.45	2.77	2.75	2.77	3.11	2.77
Disc golf	1.94	2.20	1.98	1.94	1.93	1.99
Dog parks	3.21	3.33	2.78	2.81	3.06	2.90
Fishing access	2.41	3.04	2.85	2.77	3.07	2.85
Kayak launch	3.09	3.21	3.08	2.97	3.36	3.09
Mountain biking trails	2.50	2.98	2.66	2.67	2.87	2.71
Nature trails	4.44	4.47	4.47	4.40	4.38	4.44
Non-motorized trails	3.47	3.96	3.97	4.04	4.33	3.99
Pickleball court	2.27	2.20	2.28	2.28	2.49	2.28
Picnic facilities	3.82	3.83	3.61	3.55	3.76	3.64
Playgrounds	3.67	3.83	3.32	3.37	3.64	3.45
Soccer fields	2.30	2.59	2.28	2.29	2.35	2.34
Splash pad	2.53	2.64	2.59	2.58	2.93	2.62
Tennis court	2.30	2.28	2.03	2.16	2.28	2.14
Volleyball courts	2.12	2.56	1.98	2.00	2.41	2.11
Other	3.00	4.11	3.31	2.50	3.00	3.14

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-79	80 or older
6 most important amenities by age	Beach / swimming access	Nature trails	Nature trails	Nature trails	Nature trails	Nature trails	Nature trails
	Nature Trails	Playground	Beach / swimming access	Other	Beach / swimming access	Paved walking/biking trails	Paved walking / biking trails
	Dog parks	Paved walking / biking trails	Playground	Beach / swimming access	Paved walking / biking trails	Beach / swimming access	Picnic facilities
	Playground	Beach / swimming access	Paved walking / biking trails	Paved walking / biking trails	Picnic facilities	Picnic facilities	Beach / swimming access
	Mountain biking trails	Picnic facilities	Other	Picnic facilities	Playground	Playground	Playground
	Kayak launch	Splash pad	Picnic facilities	Kayak launch	Kayak launch	Fishing access	Fishing access

Needed Outdoor Facilities

When asked about the most needed park outdoor facilities, respondents most often specified nature trails for hiking (39.2%), paved walking and biking paths (non-motorized) (29.2%), updated bathroom facilities, (26.0%) and beach/swimming access (21.1%). All communities most commonly reported the need for nature trails for hiking but respondents from Grand Haven Township and the Village of Spring Lake indicated a desire for updated bathroom facilities second most whereas the City of Grand Haven and Spring Lake Township specified a need for paved walking and biking paths.

We are interested in learning what you think are the top THREE most needed outdoor public recreation facilities in the Northwest Ottawa Area.



Other: Additional outdoor facilities written in by survey respondents for this item by at least two respondents included: ice rink (4), community pool (3), hunting (2), and Frisbee golf (2). See Appendix B for a list of the locations residents wished to see non-motorized trails, by municipality.

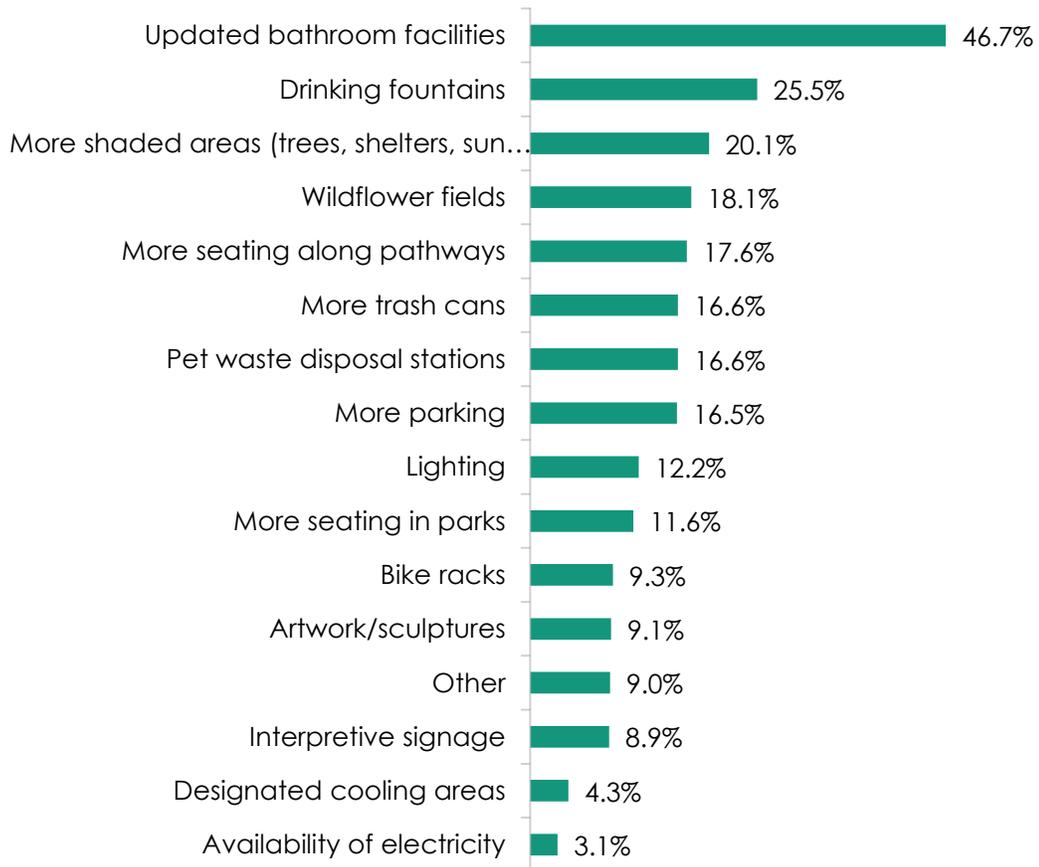
	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake
Most often selected outdoor public recreation facilities	Nature trails for hiking				
	Wildlife/nature viewing areas/overlooks	Paved walking and biking paths (non-motorized trails)	Updated bathroom facilities	Paved walking and biking paths (non-motorized trails)	Updated bathroom facilities
	Updated bathroom facilities	Beach/swimming access	Paved walking and biking paths (non-motorized trails)	Updated bathroom facilities	Paved walking and biking paths (non-motorized trails)
	Playgrounds	Updated bathroom facilities	Beach/swimming access	Wildlife/nature viewing areas/overlooks	Kayak water access
	Beach/swimming access	Covered picnic shelters	Wildlife/nature viewing areas/overlooks	Beach/swimming access	Playgrounds
	Paved walking and biking paths (non-motorized trails)	Playgrounds	Kayak water access	Dog parks	Wildlife/nature viewing areas/overlooks
	Dog parks	Dog parks	Dog parks	Playgrounds	Beach/swimming access
	Kayak water access	Fishing access	Playgrounds	Mountain biking trails	Dog parks

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-79	80 or older
Most often selected outdoor public recreation by age	Beach swimming access	Nature trails for hiking	Nature trails for hiking	Nature trails for hiking	Nature trails for hiking	Nature trails for hiking	Paved walking and biking paths
	Paved walking and biking paths	Paved walking and biking paths	Updated bathrooms	Beach / swimming access	Paved walking and biking paths	Paved walking and biking paths	Nature trails for hiking
	Nature trails for hiking	Splash pad	Beach / swimming access	Updated bathrooms	Beach / swimming access	Updated bathroom facilities	Updated bathroom facilities
	Updated bathrooms	Playgrounds	Playgrounds	Paved walking and biking paths	Updated bathroom facilities	Wildlife / nature viewing areas	Wildlife / nature viewing areas
	Covered picnic shelters	Updated bathrooms	Mountain biking trails	Wildlife / nature viewing areas	Wildlife / nature viewing areas	Beach / swimming access	Drinking fountains
	Tennis courts	Beach / swimming access	Paved walking and biking paths	Mountain bike trails	Kayak water access	Dog parks	Kayak water access

Needed Park Updates

Updated bathroom facilities (46.7%), drinking fountains (25.5%), more shaded areas (20.1%), and wildflower fields (18.1%) were most often selected as the most needed park updates. Respondents from Ferrysburg and Spring Lake were more likely to indicate a need for more shaded areas than the other communities. The need for updated bathroom facilities and drinking fountains was constant throughout the various age categories.

Please indicate the top THREE most needed park updates in the Northwest Ottawa Area:



Other: Additional outdoor facilities written in by survey respondents for this item by at least two respondents included: Trail and park upkeep and maintenance (10), updated playgrounds (7), including equipment suitable for younger children, more accessible for strollers and wheelchairs (5), mountain bike trail (4), bathrooms/upgraded or open year round (4), better trail maps/markers (3), park safety and security (3), concessions and grills (3), foot wash and water, fountains/water bottle fills (3), cellular and wi-fi access (2), recycling (2), picnic and pavilion rental (2), dog friendly (2), and community pool (2).

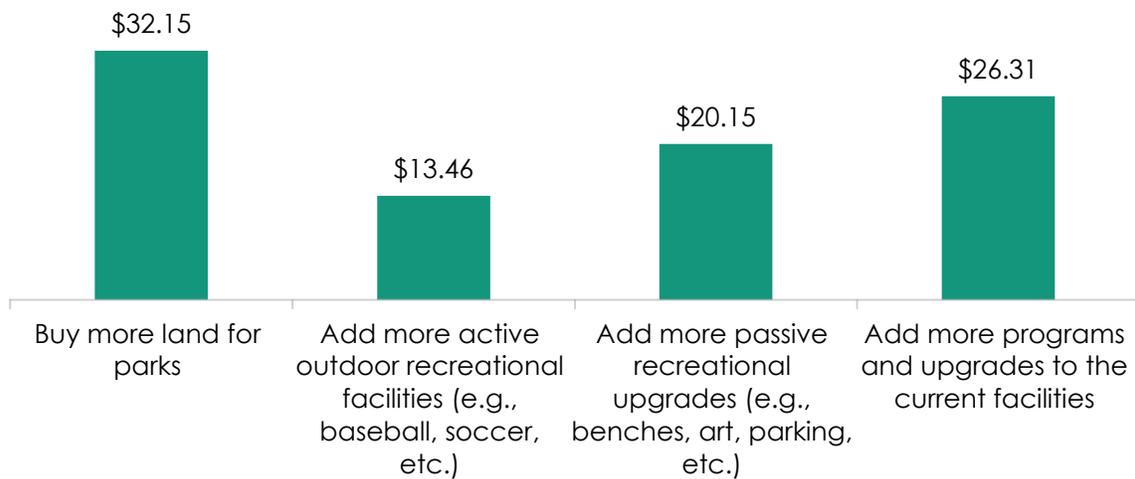
	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake
Most often selected park updates	More shaded areas (trees, shelters, sun shades, etc.)	Updated bathroom facilities	Updated bathroom facilities	Updated bathroom facilities	More shaded areas (trees, shelters, sun shades, etc.)
	Wildflower fields	Drinking fountains	Drinking fountains	Drinking fountains	Updated bathroom facilities
	Updated bathroom facilities	More parking	More seating along pathways	More shaded areas (trees, shelters, sun shades, etc.)	Drinking fountains
	Pet waste disposal stations	More trash cans	Wildflower fields	Wildflower fields	Artwork/sculptures
	Other	Other	More parking	More trash cans	Wildflower fields
	Artwork/sculptures	More shaded areas (trees, shelters, sun shades, etc.)	More shaded areas (trees, shelters, sun shades, etc.)	More seating along pathways	More seating in parks
	More seating along pathways	Pet waste disposal stations			
	More trash cans	Lighting	More trash cans	More parking	Lighting
	Drinking fountains	More seating in parks	More seating in parks	Lighting	Bike racks
	Lighting	Wildflower fields	Interpretive signage	Artwork/sculptures	More seating along pathways

	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-79	80 or older
Most often selected park updates by age	Updated bathroom facilities	Drinking fountains					
	Drinking fountains	More shaded areas	Drinking fountains	Drinking fountains	Drinking fountains	More seating along pathways	Updated bathroom facilities
	More trash cans	Drinking fountains	Wildflower fields	More trash cans	Pet waste disposal stations	More shaded areas	More seating in parks
	More parking	More trash cans	more shaded areas	More parking	More seating along pathways	Drinking fountains	Wildflower fields
	Pet waste disposal stations	More parking	Lighting	Wildflower fields	More shaded areas	Wildflower fields	More seating along pathways

Resource Allocation

Respondents felt it is most important to buy more land for parks with community resources. Respondents felt it is least important to add more active outdoor recreational facilities within the communities. Residents from the Village of Spring Lake were more likely to allocated a larger dollar amount to adding passive recreation facilities than other communities.

If it were up to you, how would you allocate \$100 among each of the following parks and recreation facility areas for the Northwest Ottawa Area?



	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	SLT	Village of Spring Lake	All
Buy more land for parks	\$37.42	\$34.72	\$31.35	\$31.71	\$30.63	\$32.15
Add more active outdoor recreational facilities (e.g., baseball, soccer, etc.)	\$10.69	\$12.71	\$14.22	\$13.21	\$13.00	\$13.46
Add more passive recreational upgrades (e.g., benches, art, parking, etc.)	\$18.22	\$24.81	\$18.57	\$19.04	\$27.33	\$20.15
Add more programs and upgrades to the current facilities	\$28.39	\$21.89	\$27.80	\$27.16	\$20.51	\$26.31

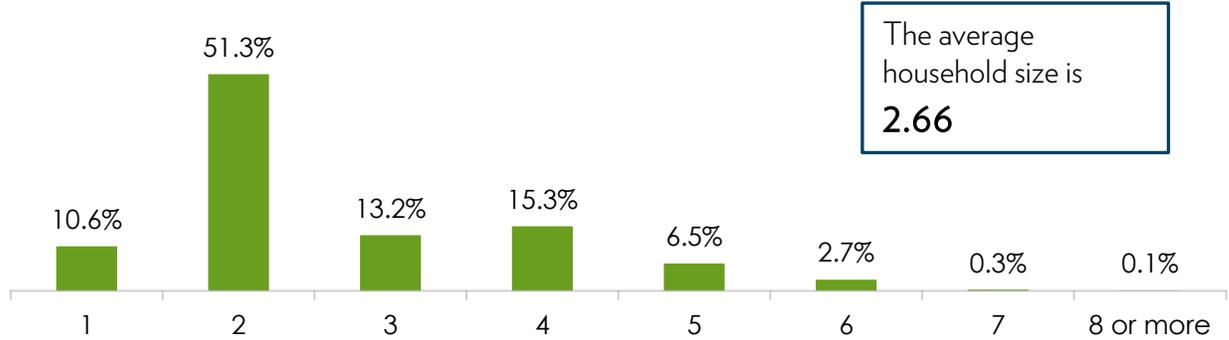
	18-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-79	80 or older
Buy more land for parks	\$36.00	\$25.16	\$30.45	\$34.46	\$35.51	\$33.37	\$23.00
Add more active outdoor recreational facilities (e.g., baseball, soccer, etc.)	\$12.27	\$15.00	\$18.81	\$15.88	\$12.71	\$12.27	\$6.30
Add more passive recreational upgrades (e.g., benches, art, parking, etc.)	\$21.82	\$22.97	\$17.36	\$18.71	\$17.91	\$23.23	\$17.09
Add more programs and upgrades to the current facilities	\$24.09	\$30.62	\$34.58	\$26.32	\$24.82	\$24.81	\$20.30

Demographics

Household Members

The majority of respondents reported living in a household with two people.

Including yourself, how many people live in your household?



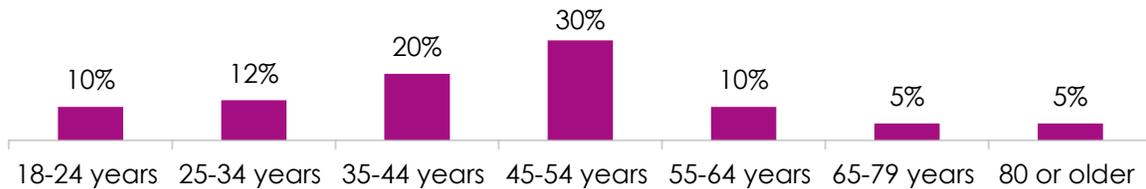
The average household size is **2.66**

Household Size	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	Spring Lake	SLT	All
Mean	2.588	2.85	2.57	2.72	2.57	2.66

Age

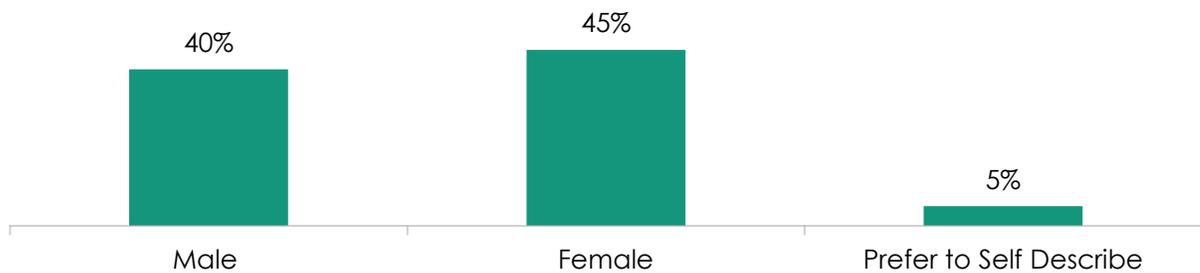
Respondents were most commonly aged 45-54 years old. When comparing these age groups to overall community demographics, the survey sample is skewed slightly older than the true population. For data points in which age is likely to affect responses, a breakout by age is provided.

What is your age?



Age	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	Spring Lake	SLT	All
18-24 years	---	8 (7.5%)	1 (.3%)	1 (.4%)	1 (1.9%)	11 (1.4%)
25-34 years	2 (5.7%)	18 (16.8%)	18 (5.2%)	18 (7.5%)	8 (15.1%)	64 (8.2%)
35-44 years	9 (25.7%)	14 (13.1%)	36 (10.3%)	35 (14.6%)	5 (9.4%)	99 (12.6%)
45-54 years	4 (11.4%)	16 (15.0%)	58 (16.6%)	40 (16.7%)	7 (13.2%)	125 (16.0%)
55-64 years	9 (25.7%)	22 (20.6%)	72 (20.6%)	47 (19.7%)	20 (37.7%)	170 (21.7%)
65-79 years	10 (28.6%)	21 (19.6%)	144 (41.3%)	87 (36.4%)	10 (18.9%)	272 (34.7%)
80 or older	1 (2.9%)	7 (6.5%)	13 (3.7%)	10 (4.2%)	2 (3.8%)	33 (4.2%)
Prefer not to answer	--	1 (.9%)	7 (2.0%)	1 (.4%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (1.1%)

What is your gender?

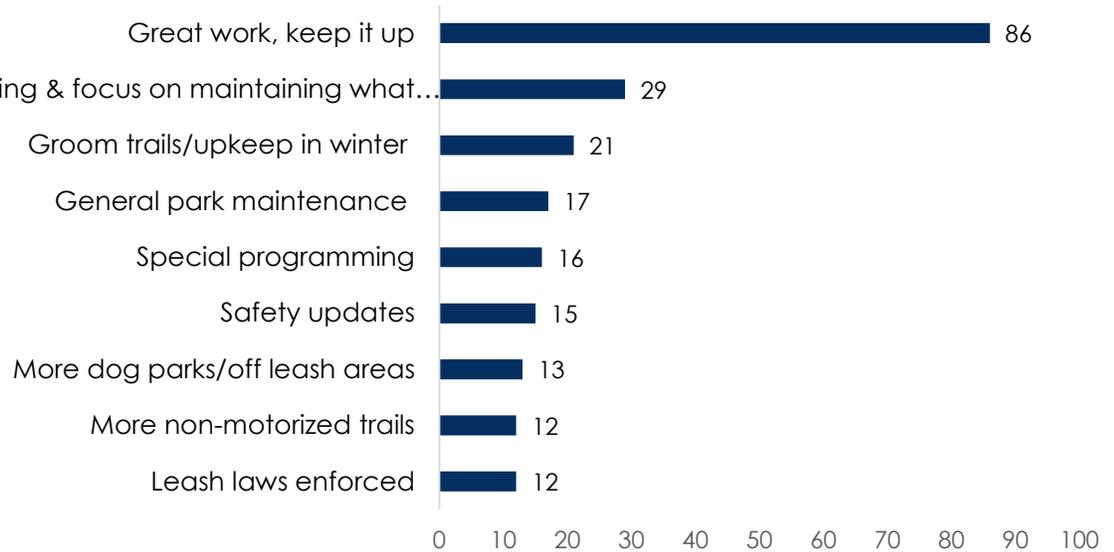


Gender	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	Spring Lake	SLT	All
Female	25 (71.4%)	(58.3%)	167 (47.7%)	111 (46.1%)	23(43.4%)	389 (49.4%)
Male	10 (28.6%)	44 (40.7%)	163 (46.6%)	123 (51.0%)	27 (50.9%)	367 (46.6%)
Prefer to Self-Describe	--	1 (.9%)	6 (1.7%)	3 (1.2%)	--	10 (1.3%)
Prefer not to answer	--	--	14 (4.0%)	4 (1.7%)	3 (5.7%)	21 (2.7%)

Please use the space below to share any additional comments that can assist the region in improving the parks, trails, open space, recreation facilities, programs or services.



The table below summarizes the key themes shared by respondents in the open ended remarks across all five municipalities—with the most common remark being one of gratitude for the parks and facilities offered in the region.



	Ferrysburg	Grand Haven	GHT	Spring Lake	SLT	All
Doing great job	3 (23.1%)	10 (28.6%)	33 (28.7%)	3 (16.7%)	37 (40.2%)	86 (31.5%)
Keep open space & protect it	4 (30.8%)	5 (14.3%)	10 (8.7%)	4 (22.2%)	6 (6.5%)	29 (10.6%)
Stop building & focus on maintaining	1 (7.7%)	2 (5.7%)	8 (7.0%)	2 (11.1%)	8 (8.7%)	21 (7.7%)
Groom trails/upkeep	1 (7.7%)	1 (2.9%)	4 (3.5%)	2 (11.1%)	9 (9.8%)	17 (6.2%)
General maintenance	--	1 (2.9%)	6 (5.2%)	2 (11.1%)	7 (7.6%)	16 (5.9%)
Special programming	--	3 (8.6%)	8 (7.0%)	--	4 (4.3%)	15 (5.5%)
Safety updates	--	1 (2.9%)	3(2.6%)	1 (5.6%)	8 (8.7%)	13 (4.8%)
More dog park/off leash areas	1 (7.7%)	--	7 (6.1%)	--	4 (4.3%)	12 (4.4%)
non-motorized trails	--	1 (2.9%)	2 (1.7%)	--	9 (9.8%)	12 (4.4%)
Leash law enforcement	--	2 (5.7%)	5 (4.3%)	--	2 (2.2%)	9 (3.3%)



Other items noted frequently were the need for increased pet waste receptacles, especially on the trails, and new and innovative ways to fund parks—perhaps through a fund or donations. One respondent said that he was so motivated to improve the mountain bike trails that he would even be willing to help pay for them personally, if he knew how to make that happen! Another resident provided his contact information to help brainstorm how to fundraise to bring back a hockey rink to the area.

Overall, many of the comments were positive comments about how the local parks were an asset to the area. Residents sing praises for their local parks!

We are very appreciative of the wonderful parks and proud of their upkeep. --Ferrysburg Resident

Thank you for all that you do! We appreciate the opportunity to add our input. So many of the visitors we have from other states are impressed with the quality and quantity of our parks—keep up the fantastic work! City of --Grand Haven Resident

Keep up the good work. The parks are a big reason my wife and I choose to move to Grand Haven Township/Ottawa County. --Grand Haven Charter Township Resident

We love hiking the parks. Also, all the programs you offer at the different parks is very nice....please continue. --Grand Haven Charter Township Resident

I firmly believe that Ottawa County owns many of the best public parks in the country already. --Spring Lake Township Resident

I love that we are investing in preserving open space in this area. --Spring Lake Township Resident

I'm glad there are various parks that preserve green spaces and encourage community building. --Village of Spring Lake Resident

However, a clear theme from the open-ended responses across all of the municipalities was also that many of the facilities needed maintenance and care and that should be a priority before expanding or considering new facilities. A few of these key quotations include:

I wish they would stop building, work more on improving--Ferrysburg

Instead of always looking for more park land and trail land to purchase, let's keep up the maintenance and upgrade the quality of the land and facilities we already have.--Grand Haven Charter Township

Please add a bridge for the bike path on 152nd to connect bike paths over Lloyd's Bayou. The path on 152nd goes out into the road between Oak Point and Pruin. This is a dangerous area for kids and walkers as people drive fast on 152nd. It prohibits many parents from allowing their kids to ride bikes to schools or friends' houses.--Spring Lake Township

The parks are great - I say just update and keep clean what we have! --City of Grand Haven

Upgrade and maintain what we have and forget buying more. --Spring Lake Township

First Things First! Repair / maintain what you have as #1 PRIORITY. --Village of Spring Lake

Keep walking trails clear in the winter. --City of Grand Haven

Proper maintenance of current parks should be a priority...Is there a place to go online to let parks no when you find something that needs to be fixed? --Grand Haven Charter Township

Conclusion & Next Steps

Residents across all five municipalities love the park system and reported using the various amenities frequently. Residents appreciated the opportunity to weigh in on the planning process through the community surveys, and expressed opinions about what they value and want to see prioritized moving forward.

"I am grateful for this survey and your commitment to our outdoor spaces. I moved here just for your outdoor spaces and its availability." Grand Haven Charter Township

- Continuing to involve residents in decisions and planning is worthwhile. In open-ended responses residents expressed appreciating being asked their opinions, and many were eager to volunteer time and money to maintain park resources—in particular bike trails, beaches, open land, and wildlife.
- Weather and location are factors that strongly influence how often someone visits a park—things that are beyond the leadership team’s control, but residents also indicated that maintaining natural areas is the most important to them and should be a focus area of the five year plan.
- It is clear that Northwest Ottawa County parks has made great efforts to make their

"North Ottawa is a great place to live because of the vast selection of parks and recreation activities. By just enhancing the programs and maintaining the present facilities is the best use of time and money over the next five year plan."
Grand Haven Charter Township

parks accessible—residents with disabilities and/or using a stroller talk about ramps and trails that are usable. However, there are areas of opportunity to allow greater access to trails, playgrounds, and bathrooms.

- Updating existing facilities and park amenities and facilities—particularly bathrooms, trails (nature, paved, bike/mountain bike), expanding beach access/finishing sections of bike trails that are dangerous, and maintaining the current parks are themes that resonate across the municipalities.

As the leadership team considers these findings and moves into the writing of the five year plan, there are several appendices that will provide further data and context for consideration:

- 1) Appendix A: a summary of the stakeholder surveys
- 2) Appendix B: a list of where residents would like see more non-motorized trails built
- 3) Appendix C: the raw open-ended data.
- 4) Appendix D: The survey instruments (community survey and stakeholder surveys, for your reference).