

# Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission

**Strategic Plan** 



Approved by the Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission on August 21, 2024 Motion PR-58

# **Acknowledgements**

Thank you to the residents, community leaders, partner organizations, visitors, and staff for their time in the preparation of the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission Strategic Plan.

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Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission

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# A Letter from the Director



August 15, 2024

Recognizing the County's rapid population growth and the need to protect high quality natural land, the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners officially formed the Parks and Recreation Commission in 1987, passing along responsibility for 9 park properties totaling around 400 acres from the Road Commission.

This first Parks Commission established the initial vision of Ottawa County Parks – a natural resource-based park system, working to protect the county's most sensitive natural communities while providing the public with opportunities for high quality educational and recreational experiences. Today Ottawa County Parks manages over 7,400 acres, 150 + miles of trails along our 4 greenways.

It was my privilege to move here in 2019 and replace the parks system's first Director, John Scholtz, who had served the county for over three decades. In 2020, while working on the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan, I realized that, thanks to the tireless work and determination of my predecessor, Commissioners, and staff, many of the initial goals set out by the Parks & Recreation Commission were nearing completion. As a result, staff began conversations about a strategic planning process for the department that would establish a roadmap for the future and prepare us for the Parks Millage renewal in 2026.

The original mission, goals, and objectives guided the targeted land acquisition strategy focused on four "greenway" corridors within the County (the Grand River, Lake Michigan Coastal, Macatawa River, and Pigeon River Greenways). This acquisition strategy successfully helped to drive approval of a 0.33 Parks Millage in 1996 and two subsequent renewals in 2006 and 2016.

There are now 42 parks and open spaces that total over 7,400 acres, a nature center with community engagement offerings, a marina, 25 rental facilities, a campground, portions of four regional non-motorized pathways, and a regional water trail. These parks and facilities are enjoyed and beloved by hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, including visitors from all over the world.

The 2024 OCPRC Strategic Plan was developed by harnessing robust public and stakeholder input as well as intensive data gathering and analysis. The OCPRC has updated the mission statement, developed a new vision statement, and updated strategic initiatives as part of the plan. These tools will allow the OCPRC to build upon the incredible existing park system and help ensure that the OCPRC continues to meet the needs of its growing community and its hundreds of thousands of visitors.

Sincerely,

~ D. S.

Jason D. Shamblin, Director Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission



# Introduction & Overview



Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission

# **Introduction & Overview**

### Welcome

The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission (OCPRC) system offers visitors abundant opportunities to engage with nature and each other. Nature-based programs provide park goers, especially children, with educational and experiential activities. Parks users can enjoy year-round recreational activities, such as kayaking, mountain-biking, disc golf, cross-country skiing, and more. In addition to programming and recreational experiences, visitors can enjoy the serenity and solitude of their surrounding environment in the parks' natural and open spaces.

Since its establishment in 1987, the OCPRC has made ongoing strides to expand natural spaces and greenway corridors, embrace the County's unique geographic position, and address the demands of population and development growth across Ottawa County. The Strategic Plan builds on these past investments defining the OCPRC's strategic initiatives to best fit the future needs and desires of Ottawa County.

### Context for the Strategic Plan

The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission Strategic Plan serves as a compass for the OCPRC through its next phase of development and service as it continues to provide high quality natural resources and recreational opportunities to residents and visitors of Ottawa County. This plan will guide staff and OCPRC leadership to serve as a roadmap for decision making. The planning process was informed by the 2021 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan, recently developed conservation and planning reports for the region, strong visitor participation, and with full support of the OCPRC.

### This plan was developed with the following ethos in mind:



Design a strategic planning process that values input from a variety of stakeholders and past parks' plans.



Develop a strategic plan that drives the OCPRC's direction, thinking, and organizational structure when delivering services to park goers and other stakeholders.



Develop a strategic plan that leverages the County's unique geographic position and community support for parks investment.

# **Geography & Growth**

Ottawa County's natural features and diverse, unique ecosystems flourish on the western coast of Michigan's lower peninsula. From the pristine shorelines of Lake Michigan to peaceful forests, Ottawa County parks provide community members and visitors with a haven of rich biodiversity and captivating spaces. The extensive resources – including sand dunes, beaches, waterways, wetlands, bayous, and woodlands – display the treasures of Ottawa County, contributing to a higher quality of life for residents and attracting thousands of visitors each year.

The wealth of natural resources played a key role in the County's history and continue to do so. From the OCPRC's establishment in 1987 to today, Ottawa County parks leadership is dedicated to preserving the County's abundant natural resources through acquisition and conservation efforts. Now at 7,402 acres, Ottawa County parks make up approximately 2% of the County's total land area. Since 2010, the annualized population increase is about 3,000 people per year. According to data compiled from the US Geological Survey's National Land Cover Database (NLCD), much of this population growth is resulting in significant changes to land use patterns in Ottawa County, **with an average of 500 acres per year being developed** (according to NLCD categorization) between 2001 and 2021. The changes in landscape may help explain the high public support (87%) for continued efforts for to protect land and natural spaces.

A diverse economy, advantageous geographic location, unique natural resources, and other indicators of a high quality of life sparked the population increase. The Ottawa County population increased by 12.6% over the last decade,<sup>2</sup> home to nearly 300,000 people in 2022.<sup>3</sup> As Michigan's fastest growing county from 2010 to 2020 (according to the 2020 US Census), it is more important than ever for the parks system to grow alongside the County's development and population growth to sustain parks access for all.

7,402 Acres managed by OCPRC.

2%

Of the County's total land area is made up of Ottawa County parks.

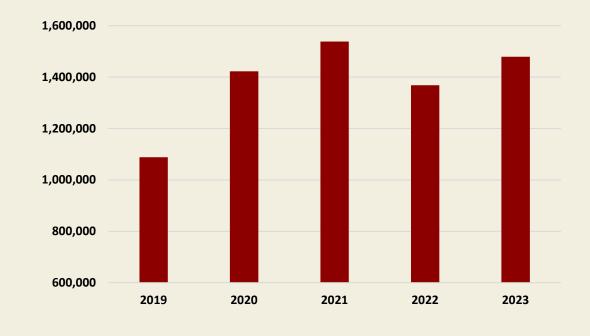


## **Park Attendance**

The OCPRC expanded the parks system and facilities through years of strategic development and organizational growth, including major projects like the Nature Education Center at Hemlock Crossing, Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, Tunnel Park, the Grand River Greenway, and newly developed Ottawa Sands. Expansion success can be largely attributed to the initial 0.33 Park Millage approved by residents in 1996 and the two subsequent renewals in 2006 and 2016.

Although the OCPRC has made efforts to diversify its funding base, the Parks Millage remains the of OCPRC's primary revenue source. Annual park visitation data (see Exhibit 1) indicates there is growing community desire and need for vibrant parks and green spaces, plentiful recreational activities, and enriching programming opportunities for the average 1.48 million park visitors each year. <sup>4</sup> As noted in the following *Key Takeaways* section, visitation increased significantly following the COVID-19 pandemic. See Appendix G for in-depth data and analysis regarding OCPRC visitation.

Managing this significant growth in the parks system visitation (and anticipated future growth to offering of new amenities) will likely require additional resources to sustain maintenance and operations.



### Exhibit 1: Annual Number of Park Visits, FY19 – FY23

# **County Parks by the Numbers**

The Ottawa County parks are highly valued amongst Ottawa County residents and sought out by tourists for the vast recreational and educational experiences offered. See *Appendices B, C, and G* for additional information.



Times the Parks were visited in 2023.



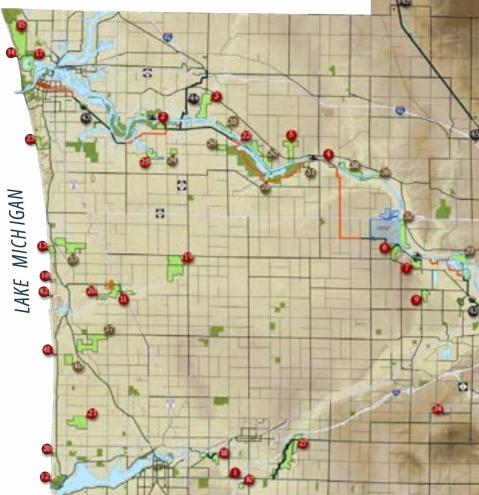
Of County residents visit an OCPRC park at least once per year.

### 839,200

Total number of unique park visitors in 2023.



Of OCPRC visitors visit the Parks along Lake Michigan and the Grand River.



#### PARKS & OPEN SPACES

Adams Street Landing 1 Connor Bayou 2 Crockery Creek Natural Area 3 Deer Creek Park 4 Eastmanville Farm 5 Grand Ravines 6 Grand River Park 7 Grose Park 8 Hager Park 9 \*Hawthorn Pond Natural Area 10 Hemlock Crossing 11 Historic Ottawa Beach 12 Kirk Park 13 North Beach Park 14 North Ottawa Dunes 15 Olive Shores 16 Ottawa 5ands 17 Paw Paw Park 18 Pigeon Creek Park 19 Pine Bend 20 Riley Trails 21 Riverside Park 22 Rosy Mound Natural Area 23 Spring Grove Park 24 Stearns Creek 25 Tunnel Park 26 Upper Macatawa Natural Area 27 Bass River Open Space 28 Bend Area Open Space 29 Bur Oak Landing 30 Eastmanville Bayour 31 Grand River Open Space 32 Hiawatha Forest 33 Johnson Street Forest 34 Jubb Bayou 35 Kuits Bayou 36 Port Sheldon Natural Area 37 Ripps Bayou 38 Robinson Forest 39 Van Buren Street Dunes 40 \*Kouw Park 41 \*Windsnest Park 42

### **REGIONAL TRAILS**

- Idema Explorers Trail 43
  - Spoonville Trail 44 Musketawa Trail 45

9

\*These properties have ownership/management agreements.

# **Community Benefits**

The Ottawa County parks serve as a significant economic and employment catalyst. A Community Benefits Survey completed by Crowe quantified some of the ways that the OCPRC contributes to the County's economy and quality of life. This includes (i) direct spending by the OCPRC, (ii) tourist spending, and (iii) residential property values. Investments in the Ottawa County parks are essential so that they can continue to contribute to the economic vitality and overall quality of life of the County.

\$6.4 million	in annual economic activity resulting from the OCPRC's budgetary spending
\$17.6 million	in total temporary benefits due to spending on ongoing large-scale projects
\$26.8 million	in current and expected annual tourism spending
\$41.5 million	in additional assessed value to residential properties near select parks
948 jobs	either directly employed by the OCPRC or supported by tourism spending attributed to the OCPRC

In addition to their added monetary value, Ottawa County parks provide additional non-monetary benefits for the local community, all of which contribute to an overall higher quality of living.

Educational and recreational programming experiences

Environmental health, including improved air and water quality, land preservation, etc.  $\bigcirc$ 

Improved physical and mental well-being, which may contribute to Ottawa County's lower obesity and physical inactivity rates compared to State and national averages.



Professional and retiree attraction and retainment

See Appendix B for additional information on the monetary and non-monetary benefits of Ottawa County parks. Note, visitation data used in Community Benefits Survey analysis is based on calendar year.

# **Strategic Plan Inputs**

This plan is an evolution of the Commission's past reports, plans, investments, and goals. The plan provides a strategic approach to accomplishing the OCPRC's vision.

To develop a realistic and tangible strategic plan, the OCPRC engaged in a comprehensive and iterative process, leveraging the following inputs:

### **Previous Plans**

Previous plans and reports, such as the 2021 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan and former mission statements and goals (see *Appendix E*), laid the foundation for the OCPRC's Strategic Plan.

### Stakeholder Engagement

The OCPRC engaged the community through surveys and in-person visioning sessions, and a day-long Strategy Lab for feedback on the parks system. See the following page for an overview of the stakeholder engagement process and *Appendix A and D* for supplemental information.

### Scientific Survey

The OCPRC engaged with Probolsky Research to poll County residents' attitudes toward the parks system. See *Appendix C* for additional information on the Scientific Survey Report.

### **Community Benefits Survey**

The OCPRC engaged Crowe LLP to evaluate the economic and quality of life benefits generated by Parks. See *Appendix B* for additional information on the Community Benefits Survey Report or the previous page for an overview.

### Park Visitation Data

The OCPRC retained a subscription to Placer.ai, which allows for analysis of visitation data to OCPRC sites from 2017 to the present. See *Appendix G* for the full analysis.

### **Comparative and Historical Analysis**

In preparation for the Strategic Plan, the OCPRC analyzed the budget, acreages, and mission and vision statements for comparable parks systems across the State of Michigan. This information can help provide benchmarks for OCPRC acreages, amenities, and operations. See *Appendix F* for additional information.

# Stakeholder Engagement

The OCPRC sought to understand the future needs of a variety of stakeholders. OCPRC leveraged several engagement methods over three months, receiving feedback from over **6,000** participants, including:

- Community members
- Park goers
- Partner and support organizations
- Local units of governments (townships and villages)
- Schools and educational institutions
- Parks staff

Three surveys developed by Crowe, offered in English and Spanish, to the public and OCPRC stakeholders in spring 2024. The Public and Stakeholder Surveys aimed to understand participants' perception, satisfaction, and desires for the overall parks system. The Public Survey was communicated via the OCPRC's website, newsletters, social media, emails, and posters with QR codes located at various parks; the Stakeholder Survey was sent to partner organizations via email. The Scientific Survey, conducted by Probolsky Research, polled approximately 400 Ottawa County residents via phone and email to understand taxpayers' attitudes towards the millage and parks system.

In addition to the three surveys, the OCPRC leadership identified over 50 partner and support organizations, elected officials, and staff to participate in engagement sessions and the Strategy Lab. Attendees participated in immersive engagement activities over three days to discuss the Parks' current state and envision goals and future priorities. Furthermore, a Strategic Plan Advisory Committee composed of representatives of key sectors of Ottawa County education, business, and municipal institutions was formed to participate in each step of the process and provide outside insights and guidance to the OCPRC.



# Key Takeaways

The strategic planning process included robust public and stakeholder engagements, data gathering efforts, and analyses to inform the development of an updated mission statement, identification of vision statement and organizational values, updated initiatives, and recommended actions outlined in the following sections. The following key takeaways summarize critical observations and preliminary recommendations.

### Observations

- Overall survey data and usage patterns show a high-level of satisfaction with the OCPRC, indicating the successful execution of the current mission (see *Appendix A,C, and G*).
- Stakeholders indicate a strong desire for the parks and programs to be promoted among, and be welcoming and accessible to, people of all ages, physical and mental abilities, and demographic groups (see *Appendix A and C*).
- Survey data and usage patterns indicate public support for OCPRC leadership in protecting land, further development of regional trails, natural resources management, and community engagement and education (see *Appendix A, C, and G*).
- Residents and stakeholders highly value conservation for sustainability, resiliency, and "nature's sake" (see *Appendix A*).
- The "Greenways" strategy should be more explicitly stated in the mission and vision given their importance.
- OCPRC facilities experienced and maintained a "pandemic-surge" in visitation, with a 25% increase for same-site visits from pre-2019 levels (see *Appendix* G).
- Fall and spring visitation is impactful, and seasonal staffing does not match evolving visitation patterns. At many parks, the fall season is especially important, and spring usage is increasing (see *Appendix G*).
- The OCPRC provides a significant positive economic impact for tourism, property values, and general economic activity (see *Appendix B*).

### Organization Implications:

- Overall feedback supports the recent OCPRC restructuring to emphasize Community Engagement and Natural Resource Management, and indicates these divisions are critical for future growth (see *Appendix A and C*).
- Divisions and support organizations should review their role within the OCPRC and realign operations to the newly developed mission, vision, values, and initiatives.
- Evaluation of staffing levels/structure should continue. Increased visitation and seasonal staffing challenges may negatively impact the OCPRC's long-term ability to sustain the high standards expected in the park system (see *Appendix A, C, and G*).
- Increased staffing levels are needed to help achieve the revised mission and new vision (see Appendix A, C, and G).
- Additional funding support is required to achieve revised mission and vision (see Appendix A, C, and G).

### Funding Implications:

- Stakeholder engagement, economic value, and visitation patterns provide evidence of strong desire for the OCPRC to continue to protect more land, help develop additional trails and accessible amenities and provide additional stewardship and engagement services.
- Survey results indicate that there may be strong support for an increased millage (see Appendix C).
- Recent statewide trends show strong support for natural resource-based parks, non-motorized pathways, and conservation millages, further indicating that an increased millage is possible. (see *Appendix F*).



# Strategic Action Plan

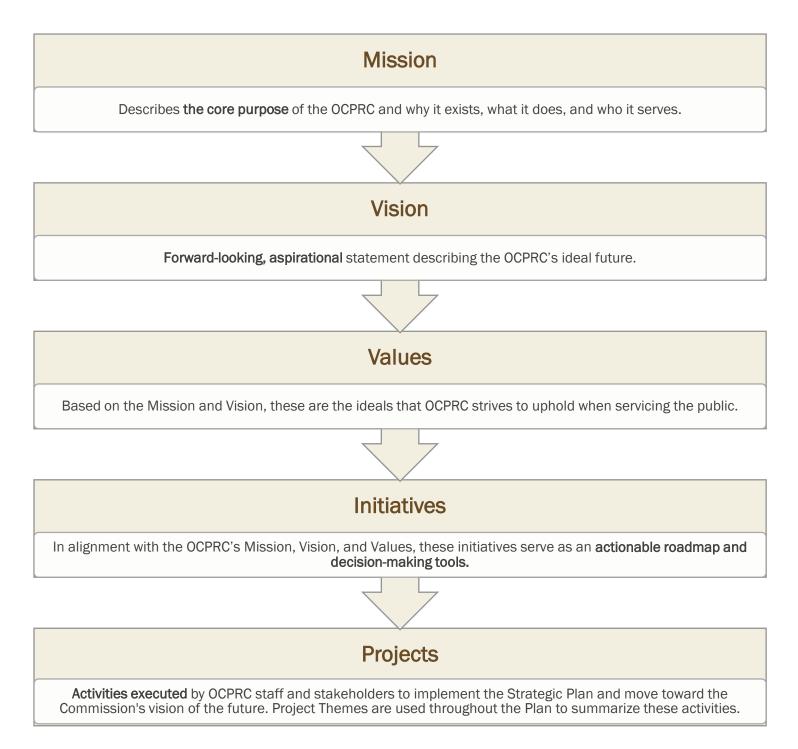


Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission

# Terminology

Mission, vision, values and initiatives start at the highest level – what's the purpose of our organization – and progressively become more granular, describing the tools to execute.

In a strategic plan, the initiatives drive the organization into the future. Projects execute the initiatives and may frequently evolve based on needs and resources.



# Mission & Vision Statements

### **Mission Statement**

The mission statement drives decision making and encompasses the OCPRC's purpose to make sure outcomes align with goals. OCPRC leadership and staff reimagined the mission statement to reflect OCPRC's shift to better focus on its strategy.

To enhance well-being by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

### **Vision Statement**

A newly minted vision is required to accurately reflect the future and culture of the OCPRC. The vision describes the OCPRC's ideal future and values describe what the OCPRC stands for.

The OCPRC summarized its purpose and aspirations in the following vision statement:

To be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.



#### STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN



The OCPRC's values are the foundations of its mission, vision, and initiatives and serve as a guide for the Commission's actions, reflecting the culture of the organization. Values set the tone of how Parks staff engage with visitors, partners, and each other.



### Accessibility

Provide inclusive and accessible parks, facilities, and programs.



### **Education**

Curate experiences to instill an awareness of the land's history and culture and appreciation for nature.



### Integrity

Demonstrate transparency, leadership, and commitment to care for the County's natural resources.

### Health & Wellness

Promote ecological integrity and recreational activities for the health and wellbeing of the community.

### Sustainability

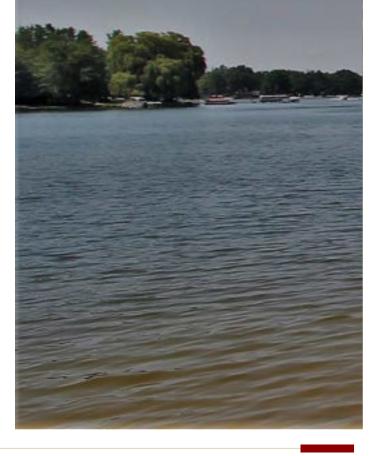
Engage in sustainable practices to protect and improve the environmental health of the natural communities.

### Collaboration

Facilitate partnerships with community and regional organizations and leverage sciencebased decision making. The OCPRC puts values into action by asking the following questions when reviewing potential projects to drive the mission, vision, and Strategic Plan:

Does this project help the OCPRC achieve its vision for the future?

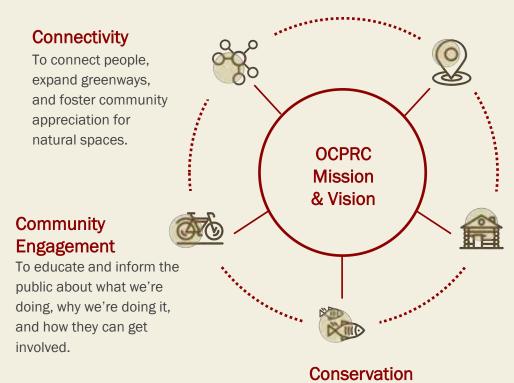
Does this project align with our values?



# STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

Five initiatives emerged from input received during the strategic planning stakeholder engagement process. The initiatives build upon past investments, goals, and objectives and will connect the OCPRC's mission with its current and future projects as it strives to achieve its vision. As new projects and objectives come to light, the OCPRC can leverage the initiatives to guide decision making, so the OCPRC grows according to these initiatives and remains true to its mission, vision, and values. The following sections describe each strategic initiative in detail.

### The 5 Initiatives Map:



To respect, protect, and enhance our diverse natural communities.

### Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection

To serve our growing community by acquiring high-quality natural resource and recreational land near protected property, greenways, and underserved areas.

### Organizational Quality

To sustainably invest in our organization to ensure continued high-quality user experiences for visitors and staff.



### The OCPRC aims to connect people, expand greenways, and foster community appreciation for natural spaces.

Fostering connectivity throughout the OCPRC system brings people to the parks, and parks to the people. The OCPRC system meet the multi-faceted needs of the community by building accessible spaces for different types of park users. From a family fun seeker to nature lover to dog owner, the parks embrace new users and are welcome to all.

By creating an inviting park culture and amazing spaces, the OCPRC helps build community.



Agree that the Parks Commission should provide leadership in completing a County-wide multiuse trail system. See *Appendix C*.

Connectivity strives for a holistic park system with an interconnected network of trails, parks, and greenway corridors throughout the County.

By strengthening the network for both people and wildlife through targeted connectivity projects, Ottawa County trails, greenways, and natural spaces become defining features of both the County's environmental landscape and the community at large.





The OCPRC educates and informs the public about what we're doing, why we're doing it, and how they can get involved.

Increasing Community Engagement opportunities and touchpoints calls on the OCPRC to build community within the parks system, improve information sharing, and recommit to a vision of parks for all.

The Strategic Plan challenges the OCPRC to increase the opportunities for everyone, meeting the community's diverse needs and interests and improving accessibility. Creating accessible parks lays at the forefront of the parks for all vision. Thus, the OCPRC commits to minimize barriers which may prevent people from using its parks and to create spaces for everyone by improving park trails and pathways and the usability of park facilities.

The OCPRC also recognizes the community's strong desires for increased programming offerings for individuals of all ages and abilities.

### 84%

Agree that the Parks Commission should provide communitywide leadership in engaging the public to experience nature.



Agree that the Parks Commission should provide communitywide leadership in ensuring that students get exposure to the outdoors.

#### See Appendix C.

Improved and expanded program offerings can attract new people to the parks, generating more avenues for environmental education, social interactions, stewardship, and engaging experiences for all park user types. A commitment to Community Engagement also means a renewed and reimagined commitment to partner organizations that support park success. The OCPRC seeks to strengthen its current partnerships and leverage new opportunities for collaboration with volunteers, park goers, County departments, local government units, schools, businesses, and foundations.





### The OCPRC acts as environmental stewards to respect, protect, and enhance our diverse natural communities.

The OCPRC's success is tied to the health of its land and natural spaces. OCPRC has a shared responsibility with the community to protect, preserve, and care for the land for its intrinsic value, mitigating the threat of human degradation and invasive species.

The OCPRC is a regional leader in natural resource preservation, caring for and protecting the area's unique ecosystems and natural resources. Parks staff are dedicated to conservation and sustainable practices to support Park ecosystems.

Preserving the County's natural spaces is imperative to honor the land's history and ensure an improved quality of life for future generations as the population continues to grow.

### 87%

Agree that the Parks Commission should protect additional land and natural spaces. **84%** 

Agree that the Parks Commission should provide leadership in dedicated resources for significant habitat restoration and green infrastructure.

#### See Appendix C.

At times, natural resource management interventions are needed to restore and/or enhance natural communities, providing new or improved habitat or creating green infrastructure.

The OCPRC seeks to collaborate with local conservation and land-based organizations to optimize the natural community quality to benefit flora and fauna. Further, the OCPRC aims to create more opportunities, such as volunteering, to encourage community engagement in conservation efforts.





The OCPRC sustainably invests in our organization to ensure continued high-quality experiences for visitors and staff.

### 85%

Rate the job being done by the OCPR as 'excellent / good.'

See Appendix C.

The OCPRC strives to maintain gold standard parks, which requires significant investment in human and capital resources. This is especially true after 30 years of expansion to over 7,400 park acres and averaging over 1.3 million visits annually.

Continued care for parks and facilities- through reinvestment in facilities, amenity upgrades, expanded natural resource management, and user experience development- cultivates access and sustainability for current and future generations. Diverse income sources are needed to upgrade facilities and increase staff so that the OCPRC can provide accessible, highquality parks and ecosystems and deliver experiences for its diverse park users.

These "parks for all" investments do not replace continued commitment to exceptional maintenance, operations, and natural resource management, rather, it increases the importance of this work.





# Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection

The OCPRC system serves our growing community by acquiring highquality natural resources and recreational land near protected property, greenways, and underserved areas.

Commitment to a calculated land acquisition and protection strategy enables the OCPRC to continue to proactively identify land with high ecological value and high-quality natural features, or land that connects the population with open spaces. The OCPRC recognizes the need for expansion of County parks as the desire for recreational and educational opportunities and demand for open, natural parks grows.

The OCPRC seeks to collaborate with local conservation and land-based organizations to strengthen best practices in natural resource management. Further, the OCPRC aims to educate the community on the importance of park preservation.

### **81%**

Agree that the Parks Commission should acquire land or easements to protect unique environmental areas such as wetlands, sand dunes, mature woodlands, and wildfire areas.

78%

Agree that the Parks Commission should acquire land or easements for trails and bike paths.

**71%** 

Agree that the Parks Commission should acquire property for habitat restoration or green infrastructure.

See Appendix C.



The image featured above can be credited to Andrew Roszkowski.

# **Project Themes**

These themes are intermediary objectives between the initiatives and the projects. The following table summarizes these themes and identifies related initiatives as well as which divisions would be responsible for executing the Project Theme.

Objective	Initiative(s)	Responsible OCPRC Division(s)	
Increase and maintain the quality of the County's natural communities	Conservation	Natural Resources Management	
Provide leadership in dedicating resources to undertake significant habitat restoration and green infrastructure projects to improve water quality, increase native species, and increase and protect native plant and animal biodiversity.	Conservation	Natural Resources Management	
Provide natural land management leadership in Ottawa County to control invasive and/or overpopulated species (such as deer) or to address other factors negatively affecting natural lands.	Conservation	Natural Resources Management	
Provide leadership and cooperative management in completing the regional trail system in Ottawa County	Connectivity	Planning	
Help ensure a variety of connectivity modes or users to access County parks (i.e. personal vehicles, transit, multi-use pathways)	Connectivity	Planning	
Complete primary Greenway trails (Idema Explorers Trail, Macatawa Greenway Trail, Pigeon River Trail, Coastal Trail)	Connectivity	Planning	
Provide community-wide leadership in outdoor education, recreational programs, and volunteer opportunities.	Community Engagement	Community Engagement	
Provide leadership for student exposure to the outdoors through curriculum-based field trips and service-based learning opportunities.	Community Engagement	Community Engagement	
Continue to strive to engage the public	Community Engagement	Community Engagement	
Protect additional land and natural spaces to conserve key natural features, habitat, natural communities, and for future public access.	Conservation, Strategic Land Acquisitions	NRM and Planning	
Increase "landscape-level" planning efforts to increase resiliency and biodiversity levels, and help guide land protection efforts	Conservation, Strategic Land Acquisitions	NRM and Planning	
Help facilitate the development of plentiful, accessible recreation facilities across the County	Organizational Quality, Community Engagement	Planning, Operations	
Develop strategic goals for cost-recovery initiatives	Organizational Quality, Community Engagement	Operations, Community Engagement, Planning	
Ensure all OCPRC parks are clean, safe, and enjoyable	Connectivity, Organizational Quality	Planning, Operations	
Ensure adequate natural-resources-based recreation areas, amenities, and enriching/educational spaces across the County	Conservation, Strategic Land Acquisitions, Connectivity	Planning, Natural Resources Management, Community Engagement	
Complete land/easement acquisitions needed for Greenway Trail Connections (Idema Explorers Trail, Macatawa Greenway Trail, Pigeon River Trail, Coastal Trail)	Conservation, Strategic Land Acquisitions, Connectivity	Planning, Natural Resources Management	
Continue to seek and secure funding from diverse sources	All	All	
In addition to diversifying funding sources, review options to increase funding	All	All	
Continue to review opportunities for organizational efficiencies and employee development	All	All	
Exert more deliberate effort to drive and maintain partnerships	All	All	
Increase data-driven decision-making	All	All	



### Implementation & Monitoring Recommendations



Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission

# Implementation & Monitoring Approach

A successful strategic plan requires tangible goals and a realistic implementation timeline and monitoring approach. Possible project management methodologies to execute a successful implementation are *phased, parallel, or crashed*. The OCPRC should select the approach methodology that complements the current culture and cadence of current work, using a formal project management structure to do so.

All strategic plan implementation approaches require OCPRC leadership to:

1 Create buy-in

Communicate clearly

Align resources effectively Manage risk Monitor success



## **Implementation Steps**

### 1 Create Buy-In

1

The OCPRC can create buy-in by forming working groups to execute strategic goals and objectives and monitor success. Members of the working groups act as champions for these strategic goals, encouraging change and growth for the OCPRC both internally and externally.

2

Working groups create buy-in from stakeholders, the community, and park users to initiate implementation.

### 2 Communicate Clearly

Clear communication is key when implementing change and fostering community support, or buy-in. The OCPRC should communicate its strategic goals and timeline early and often for a smooth transition into its next phase.

Effective communication may require the use of the following tools:

- Develop a stakeholder engagement matrix
- Develop a communications plan with set, cadenced connection points
- Maintain internal communication
- Include opportunities for community input and updates
- Celebrate wins

### **3 Align Resources Effectively**

Successful implementation of a strategic plan may include resource realignment and organizational structure changes so efforts are appropriately situated to achieve the initiatives and objectives outlined in this plan. OCPRC resources should grow proportionately with the growth of the park system to adequately fulfill the needs of the current and future park system and users. Thus, the OCPRC needs additional human and capital resources to support its Strategic Plan and accomplish its vision.

OCPRC personnel have the dedication and expertise to contribute to the overall success of the parks. However, they are constrained by limited funding sources and challenges in retaining and recruiting seasonal employees which can make it challenging to deliver the quality and experiences desired by park users and the community. These human and capital constraints have the potential to limit initiative implementation efforts and thus, impede upon the fulfillment of the initiatives.

The OCPRC will review realignment recommendations and staff feedback to consider organizational structure changes. As part of this process, the OCPRC should identify the positions and departments responsible for each initiative, the jobs to be done to implement each initiative, and the resources needed to get the job done.

# Implementation Steps Continued

### 4 Manage Risk

The OCPRC should identify potential risks that will hinder implementation of the Strategic Plan. Managing risk starts with risk mitigation, by proactively identifying potential project risks at the onset. Risks can be positive (opportunities for growth and improvement) or negative, and come in many forms strategic, external, financial, or performance. Risk mitigation is the action of using tools and strategies to avoid, exploit, transfer or reduce the risk/issue.

The OCPRC should create a risk register to document and track all potential risks and issues (risks actively impacting the projects) to be continuously monitored by the risk manager, a resource identified from the Working Group. A sample risk register is displayed below.

### 5 Monitor Success

Strategic plan implementation requires a monitoring approach to track successes and identify problem areas early on. Departments should use a project- specific monitoring philosophy and goals that align with their monitoring philosophy for day-to-day business activity. The implementation working group should define monitoring goals, timeline, and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to establish an objective monitoring approach. Examples of an OCPRC project and potential KPIs is listed in the table below.

ID	Risk/Issue	Mitigation Strategy	Impact	Priority
1.1	Risk: description of risk	Describe here		

Project	Metric 1	Metric 2
Increase the	Develop a	
number of parks as	prioritization	Designate 1 park
"effectively invasive	scheme and	per fiscal year
free"	treatment plan	

# **Financial Considerations**

### Strategic Plan implementation requires significant investment to achieve the level of service, programming, and maintenance sought by Ottawa County residents.

Scientific survey results showed resident support for OCPRC leadership in significant habitat restoration and conservation, development of a regional trail system, development of camping and other revenue-generating or in-demand recreational/educational facilities.

The OCPRC is already making progress on many of these initiatives and finds funding from multiple sources to complete work. For example, the OCPRC leveraged \$500,000 to complete the \$19 million acquisition and initial development of Ottawa Sands. Currently, the OCPRC conducts operations and maintenance within the millage budget.

However, continued expansion of services to meet the high standards expected of the parks system requires additional funds that are not available at the current mill rate. Parks leadership may consider the following supplemental funding options to meet the funding requirements of strategic plan implementation and delivery of exceptional parks experiences:

- Grant funding from outside sources
- Partnerships with local governments, conservation organizations, and community foundations
- Parks Foundation fundraising campaigns and other private donations
- Increased mill rate

The OCPRC should continue work to diversify and increase funding while also immediately commencing preparations for the 2026 millage campaign. All divisions will need to assist in preparations for a possible millage increase by identifying long-term staffing and capital needs for the implementation of this Strategic Plan. This work will help identify which mill rate would be appropriate and develop an overall millage campaign which can be presented to the public.

# Organizational Considerations

### Organizational realignment and new position creation are recommended to support growth and strategic initiative implementation.

Crowe provided the OCPRC with general organizational realignment recommendations based on document review, input from OCPRC staff, and industry knowledge. Multiple recommendations create new positions to best resource the OCPRC for successful strategic plan implementation. Additional analysis may be required to determine the exact duties and function of each recommended position. Crowe did not complete an in-depth financial analysis of the organization, and new positions will be dependent on available funding.

The OCPRC should consider immediate implementation of position realignment recommendations and some new positions (for instance, to establish the new Business & Visitor Services Division). Creation of other new positions may need to wait if and until residents approve an increased mill rate or other additional funding is secured. However, the recommendation types- realignment and net new positions- are mission crucial to successful Plan implementation.

In consideration with the Strategic Plan, the OCPRC's five functional areas, or divisions, are linked to the applicable strategic initiative(s) – Connectivity, Community Engagement, Conservation, Organizational Quality, Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection– in the table below. The table also includes the newly recommended Business Operations division. This identifies staff that would likely have primary responsibility for different facets of Strategic Plan implementation.

OCPRC Division/Organization:	Connectivity	Community Engagement	Conservation	Organizational Quality	Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection
Community Engagement	Х	Х			
Natural Resource Management	х		х	x	Х
Park Planning & Development	x		Х	Х	Х
Fund Development & Gifts		X		X	Х
Park Maintenance & Operations		X	x	X	
Business Operations		Х		Х	
Support Organizations	х	x	х		Х

#### Guide for Oversight and Completion of Strategic Initiatives

# Division-based Implementation

### Successful strategic plan execution requires Implementation Champions and divisional goal setting.

Change is not successful without leadership support and the use of Implementation Champions to put the Plan into practice. Champions volunteer for the role and are charged with encouraging peers to accept and use the Plan elements. These resources generally embrace change, communicate effectively, and inspire others. Each OCPRC division should have at least one Implementation Champion and each Parks Commissioner should be a public-facing Champion.

Implementation Champion responsibilities generally include:

- Communicate the change and positively reinforce the change
- Act as a role model
- Answer questions and help train fellow employees
- Monitor acceptance progress and identify problems
- Provide feedback to leadership

Additionally, each OCPRC division should develop their own strategic planning and realignment initiative to determine how the division will help implement this plan and execute a millage campaign. This division-based work should be led by the Implementation Champion. The Community Engagement, Business Services (new division), and Natural Resource Management divisions should update or realign internal documents in light of this Strategic Plan.

Last, this Strategic Plan should be used as a guiding principle in the development of a new Open Space Plan, Parks Foundation Strategic Plan, and Friend of Ottawa County Parks Strategic Plan. Divisional Implementation Champions should assist in development of these plans to promote alignment.



### References

<sup>1</sup> US Geological Survey, National Land Cover Database (accessed July 12, 2024). <u>https://www.usgs.gov/centers/eros/science/national-land-cover-database</u>

<sup>2</sup> Ottawa County, Population and Growth Rates in Ottawa County (accessed March 14, 2024). <u>https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/Planning/pdf/Databooks/Population\_Estimates.pdf</u>

<sup>3</sup> Ottawa County, Ten Largest Counties in Michigan 2022 (accessed March 14, 2024). <u>https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/Planning/pdf/Databooks/Estimates\_MichiganTop10.pdf</u>

<sup>4</sup> Placer.ai, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission Park Visitors 2019 – 2023 (accessed April 22, 2024).



# Appendices

- Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Information
- Appendix B: Community Benefits Report
- Appendix C: Scientific Survey Executive Summary
- Appendix D: Strategy Lab Outputs
- **Appendix E:** Mission Statement Evolution and History
- **Appendix F:** Park System Benchmarking and Comparison
- Appendix G: Placer.ai Data Analysis and Summary Statistics





### Appendix A: Stakeholder Engagement Information

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT INFORMATION

# Stakeholder Engagement **Overview**

#### **SURVEYS**

Crowe administered surveys to (1) the Public and (2) OCPRC Stakeholders, which were open for responses for 63 days.

Both surveys aimed to understand the community's perception, satisfaction, and needs for the overall park system.



engagement sessions were hosted by Crowe.

**ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS** 

Crowe hosted six engagement sessions and invited the following:

- Ottawa County Parks Staff
- Ottawa County Parks Leadership
- Partner Organizations
- Support Organizations
- Local Units of Government
- Parks Commission / Advisory Committee

\*The information included in Appendix A is summarized based on the Stakeholder Engagement Themes presentation, which was presented during the Strategy Lab. Please contact OCPRC staff to receive a copy, if desired.

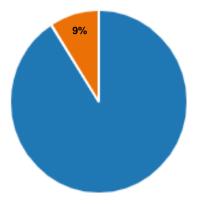
STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT INFORMATION

# Survey Observations

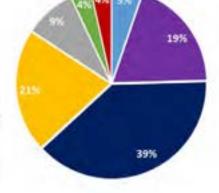
#### PARTICIPANTS

#### Public Survey Participants

- Ottawa County Residents
- Non-residents



#### Stakeholder Survey Participants



#### . Other

- OCPRC Staff
- Local Government Unit / Government Entity
- School / School District
- # Not-for-profit Organization
- Land Managers / Conservation Organization
- Recreational-based Organization / Club

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT INFORMATION

# Survey Observations

SATISFACTION AMONGST PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDERS High satisfaction with the park programming and educational opportunities

Public	•
53%	

Stakeholders: 62%

High satisfaction with the **recreational facilities** offered at the Ottawa County parks

Public: 85%

Stakeholders: 89%

The current **size and scope** of the Ottawa County Parks organization *adequately* meets the current and future conservation and recreation needs in Ottawa County.

Public:	Stakeholders:
53%	60%

### **Survey Observations**

#### **PUBLIC USER FEEDBACK THEMES**

Over 1,100 survey participants provided additional comments or feedback in addition to responding to the series of multiple-choice questions. Responses were reviewed and categorized based on reoccurring themes.

Accessibility	<ul> <li>Limited handicap parking</li> <li>Beaches lack accessible walkways</li> <li>Desire for more inclusive playgrounds</li> </ul>
Parks Growth	<ul> <li>Purchase waterfront properties, especially Grand River and Lake Michigan</li> <li>More parks in the Northeast area of the County</li> </ul>
Environmental Stewardship	<ul> <li>Continue to preserve green spaces</li> <li>Keep Ottawa Dunes and newly acquired land natural and undeveloped</li> <li>Continue prioritizing habitat preservation</li> </ul>
User Experience	<ul> <li>More swimming areas, especially in eastern Ottawa County</li> <li>More water-based activities and access (e.g., kayak and paddle board launches)</li> <li>Expanded hiking (paved and non-paved) and biking trails</li> </ul>
Quality of Parks	<ul> <li>Maintain and improve current parks</li> <li>Need clean and functioning restrooms</li> <li>Add more trash cans</li> </ul>
Community Outreach	<ul> <li>Inform community of OCPRC progress (e.g., communicate updated map annually)</li> <li>Expand volunteer programming</li> </ul>
Programming	<ul> <li>Weekend programming</li> <li>Program offerings for all ages – young and old</li> <li>Free classes</li> <li>Overnight experiences</li> </ul>

# Stakeholder Engagement Sessions



## **Survey Data**

#### Table 1: Survey Details

	Public Survey	Stakeholder Survey
Mode	Online	Online
Language	English and Spanish	English
Number of Questions	8 - 12	13 - 15
Type of Questions	Multiple choice and 1 optional open- ended questions	Multiple choice and optional open- ended questions
Target Respondents	Ottawa County residents, tourists, park users and non-users	Partner and support organizations, local units of government, Parks staff and leadership, Parks Commission and Advisory Committee
Survey Fielding	February 2 – April 10, 2024	February 2 – April 10, 2024
Survey Participants	5,621	57

#### Table 2: Public Survey Questions

ID	Question
1*	Are you a resident of Ottawa County?
2	If you're not an Ottawa County resident, please provide your zip code.
3	As a non-resident, why do you use Ottawa County parks?
4*	What type of park user are you? Please select all that apply.
5*	On average, how often do you visit a park operated by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission?
6*	If Never, please select a reason for not visiting a park.
_	On a scale of 1 to 5, rank your satisfaction with the recreational facilities offered at the Ottawa County parks
7	(e.g., biking and hiking trails, kayak and boat launches, park buildings, fishing access sites, winter sports facilities, playgrounds, etc.)
8	On a scale of 1 to 5, rank your satisfaction with the quantity and location of park and open space properties
	in the Ottawa County parks system.
9	On a scale of 1 to 5, rank your satisfaction with the park programming and educational opportunities (e.g., Interpretive education, 'Step it Up' walking sessions, Field trip opportunities, camps, Storytime, etc.).
	As the fastest growing county in Michigan, is the current size and scope of the Ottawa County Parks
10*	organization adequate to fully meet the current and future conservation and recreation needs in Ottawa
	County?
11*	If No, where would like to see expansion and increased investment by the Ottawa County Parks and
	Recreation Commission. Please select up to 3.
12	Please provide any additional feedback or comments here.

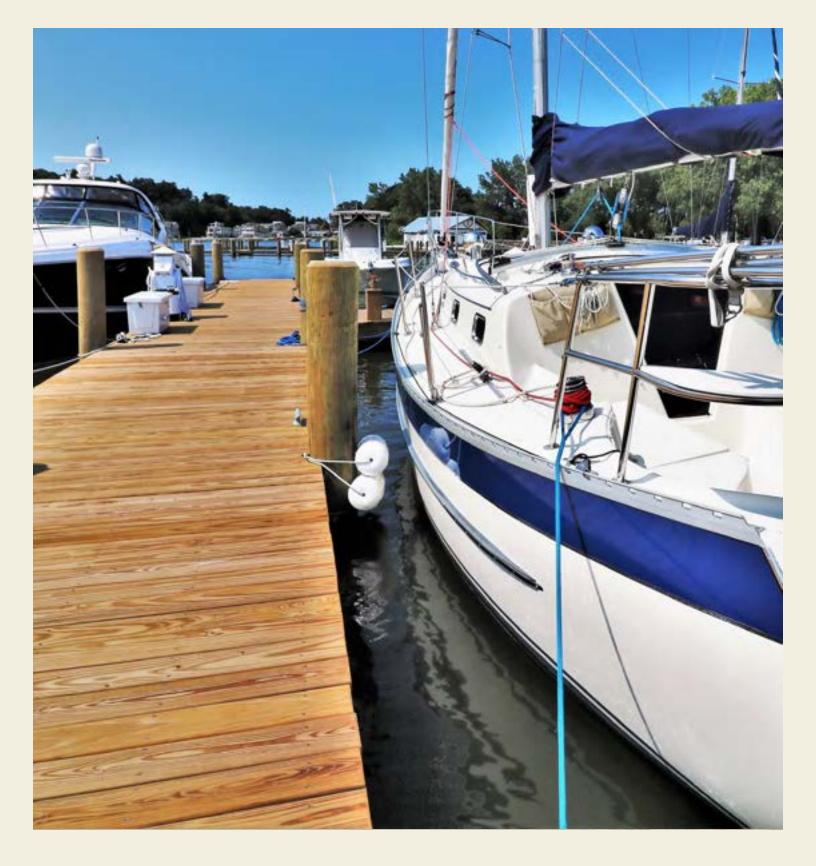
An asterisk (\*) indicates the question was required.

# **Survey Data**

#### Table 3: Stakeholder Survey Questions

ID	Question
1	What type of stakeholder group do you represent?
2*	On a scale of 1 to 5, rank the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission's efforts to partner with the group you represent?
3	On a scale of 1 to 5, rank your satisfaction with the park programming and educational opportunities (e.g., Interpretive education, 'Step it Up' walking sessions, field trip opportunities, camps, Storytime, etc.).
4	On a scale of 1 to 5, rank your satisfaction with the recreational facilities offered at the Ottawa County parks (e.g., biking and hiking trails, kayak and boat launches, park buildings, fishing access sites, winter sports facilities, playgrounds, etc.).
5*	As the fastest growing county in Michigan, is the current size and scope of the Ottawa County Parks organization adequate to fully meet the current and future conservation and recreation needs in Ottawa County?
6*	If No, where would like to see expansion and increased investment by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission. Please select up to 3.
7	Please provide any additional feedback or comments here.
8	What existing park amenities are falling short of your organization's needs?
9	What are your recommendations to make the parks more sustainable?
10	What are your recommendations to make the parks more accessible?
11	Please provide at least one example of a strength(s) of Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission.
12	Please provide at least on example of an area(s) of growth for Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission.
13	What is the name of your partner organization?
14	Are you willing to be contacted to provide additional context to your response?
15	If Yes, please provide your Name and Email.

An asterisk (\*) indicates the question was required.



## Appendix B: Community Benefits Report

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Smart decisions. Lasting value.<sup>™</sup>

### Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission – Community Benefits Survey Report

August 2024



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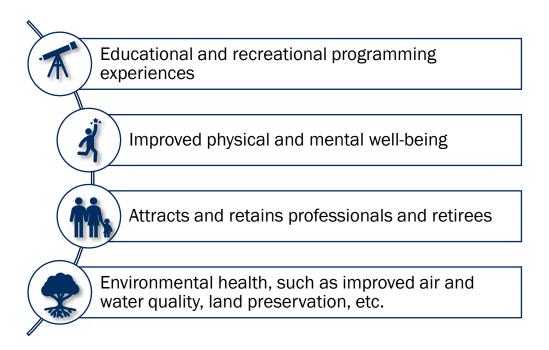
### **Executive Summary**

The Ottawa County ("County") parks ("Parks") serve as a significant economic and employment catalyst, contributing to the County's economy through (i) direct spending by the Parks, (ii) tourist spending, and (iii) residential property values. Investments in the Ottawa County parks are essential so that they can continue to contribute to the economic vitality of the County.

Ottawa County parks generated the following:

\$6.4 million	in annual economic activity resulting from Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission's (OCPRC) budgetary spending ( <i>exhibits 2.1-2.2</i> )
\$17.6 million	in total temporary benefits due to spending on large-scale construction projects (from 2018-2024) <i>(exhibits 2.3-2.4)</i>
\$26.8 million	in current and expected annual tourism spending <i>(exhibit</i> s 3.1-3.3)
\$41.5 million	in additional assessed value to residential properties near select parks <i>(exhibits 4.1-4.3)</i>
1,082 jobs	in both permanent and temporary supported employment added (exhibit 1.2)

In addition to adding monetary value, Ottawa County parks provide of non-monetary benefits for the local community, which contribute to an overall higher quality of living.





Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission ("OCPRC") engaged Crowe LLP ("Crowe") to analyze and quantify the estimated value of the OCPRC to the community, including an analysis of the economic, fiscal and quality of life benefits of the OCPRC parks (the "Parks"). The analysis includes both current benefits and one-time benefits from two recent construction projects - the Grand River Greenway and Ottawa Sands Development.

Ottawa County, Michigan (the "County") is located in Western Michigan, along the eastern shoreline of Lake Michigan, and is known for its rich history of indigenous activity, fur trading, logging, agriculture, industry, and tourism. With 24 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline, extensive sand dunes, and three large rivers that flow into Lake Michigan, the County features a wealth of natural resources.

The County began experiencing a population boom in the 1970s and has maintained around 10% growth every decade since then. Throughout this time, OCPRC tried to protect the land and natural resources and to provide expanded recreational opportunities. OCPRC expanded from nine parks in 416 acres to over 40 parks spanning over 7,350 acres. As the County prepares for the 2026 millage renewal and reviews its long-term goals, the Community Benefits Survey Report (the "Report") provides the estimated economic, fiscal, and quality of life benefits of the Parks to include in OCPRC's overall comprehensive Strategic Plan and to use as a tool for the millage renewal campaign.

### Community Monetary & Employment Benefits

#### 1. Community Monetary & Employment Benefits Summary

The Parks serve as a significant economic and employment catalyst, contributing to the County's economy through (i) direct spending by the Parks, (ii) tourist spending, and (iii) residential property values. The symbiotic relationship between the Parks and the County's economy and labor market underscores the role of the Parks as a cornerstone for economic growth and job sustainability.

The annual budget spending on Parks operations generates approximately \$6.4 million in total benefits annually and about 55 permanent jobs, employing individuals who provide the necessary goods and services to maintain the parks system. Spending on construction and improvement projects within the Parks further stimulate economic activity, by investing in labor, materials, and professional services. OCPRC construction projects generate over \$17.5 million in total temporary benefits and about 134 temporary jobs. Overall, Park spending enhances the quality of the Parks while also circulating money through the community and contributing to the economic vitality of the County.

Additionally, the Parks attract hundreds-of-thousands of tourists annually, who spend \$26 million annually in the local hospitality, service, and retail industries. This encourages growth of the County's tourism sector and supports almost 900 permanent jobs.

Finally, the proximity of residential properties to the Parks in residential areas tends to elevate property values. This leads to higher property taxes and thus, additional County tax revenue. For the Parks included in this analysis, the residential properties' proximity of Parks added nearly \$41.5 million in additional assessed value to the properties and over \$1 million in annual property taxes. This increase in property values reflects the premium which residents place on nearby access to the natural and recreational amenities offered by the Parks, and the enhanced quality of life they provide.

Exhibit 1.1: Summary of Community Monetary Benefits Derived from Ottawa County Parks			
Exhibit	Total		
Ex. 2.1	\$ 6,218,458		
Ex. 2.2	171,381		
Ex. 2.3	7,255,865		
Ex. 2.4	10,365,128		
Ex. 3.1	24,204,711		
Ex. 3.2	1,972,310		
Ex. 3.3	612,601		
Ex. 4.2	41,469,690		
Ex. 4.3	1,029,297		
	Ex. 2.1 Ex. 2.2 Ex. 2.2 Ex. 2.3 Ex. 2.4 Ex. 3.1 Ex. 3.2 Ex. 3.3 Ex. 4.2		

 Based on comparison of residential parcels within 500 feet versus one quarter mile of the following parks: (i) Hager Park, (ii) Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, (iii) North Ottawa Dunes, (iv) Paw Paw Park, (v) Rosy Mound Natural Area.

Exhibit 1.2: Summary of Community Employment Benefits Derived from Ottawa County Parks			
Benefit Category	Exhibit	Total	
Ongoing Employment Supported			
Current OCPRC Annual Budget Supported Employment (based on 2024 Budget)	Ex. 2.1	54	
Additional Ottawa Sands Budget Supported Employment (based on 65% capacity estimate)	Ex. 2.2	1	
Tourism Supported Employment	Ex. 3.4	893	
Total Ongoing Employment Supported	_	948	
	-		
Temporary Employment Supported			
2018-22 Grand River Greenway Construction Supported Employment	Ex. 2.3	57	
2023-24 Ottawa Sands Construction Supported Employment	Ex. 2.4	77	
Total Temporary Employment Supported		134	
	-		

Note: Values are rounded to nearest whole number.

Exhibits 1.3a, 1.3b, and 1.4 below are solely intended to contextualize the monetary benefits calculated within this Report in comparison to spending inputs and the County's broader tourism economy. The exhibits are not projections for future performance. Instead, they represent a "snapshot" of recent performance based on the data included within, and available at the time of, this Report.

Exhibit 1.3a: Annual Monetary Benefits vs Spending		
Input / Output Category	Exhibit	Amount (\$)
Annual Spending		
Current OCPRC Annual Budget (2024 Budget)	Supp.	\$ 6,019,154
Additional Ottawa Sands Annual Budget (based on 65% capacity estimate)	Supp.	175,991
Total Annual Spending		\$ 6,195,145
Annual Monetary Benefits		
Current OCPRC Annual Budget Benefits (based on 2024 Budget)	Ex. 2.1	\$ 6,218,458
Additional Ottawa Sands Budget Benefits (based on 65% capacity estimate)	Ex. 2.2	171,381
Current Annual Tourist Benefits (based on 2023 Placer data)	Ex. 3.1	24,204,711
Additional Annual Tourist Benefits Post-Completion of Ottawa Sands Project	Ex. 3.2	1,972,310
Additional Annual Tourist Benefits Post-Completion of Grand River Greenway Projects	Ex. 3.3	612,601
Total Annual Monetary Benefits		\$ 33,179,461
Total Annual Monetary Benefit per Dollar Spent		\$ 5.36

Note: The exhibit is <u>not</u> a projection and does <u>not</u> suggest that every additional dollar of annual spending in the future will return the same result.

Exhibit 1.3b: Construction Monetary Benefits vs Spending			
Input / Output Category	Exhibit	A	mount (\$)
Construction Spending			
2018-22 Grand River Greenway Construction Spend	Supp.	\$	5,120,801
2023-24 Ottawa Sands Construction Spend	Supp.		7,353,991
Total Constructon Spending		\$	12,474,792
Construction Monetary Benefits			
Total 2018-22 Grand River Greenway Construction Benefits	Ex. 2.3	\$	7,255,865
Total 2023-24 Ottawa Sands Construction Benefits	Ex. 2.4		10,365,128
Total Construction Monetary Benefits		\$	17,620,993
Total Construction Monetary Benefit per Dollar Spent		\$	1.41

Note: The exhibit is <u>not</u> a projection and does <u>not</u> suggest that every additional dollar of construction spending in the future will return the same result.

Exhibit 1.4: Parks Tourism Spending vs Total Ottawa County Tourism Spending				
	Exhibit	Amount (\$)		
Current Parks Tourist Spending vs County Total Tourist Spending				
Current Annual Tourist Benefits (based on 2023 Placer data)	Ex. 3.1	\$ 24,204,711		
Divided by: 2022 Ottawa County Total Tourism Spending	Supp.	425,650,648		
Current Annual Tourist Benefits as % of 2022 County Tourist Spending		5.7%		

Note: The exhibit is <u>not</u> a projection and does <u>not</u> suggest that the same proportion of County-wide tourism spending will be attributable to the Parks in future years.

#### 2. Community Economic Benefits from Parks Spending

Parks spending- both annual budget and improvement-related- creates multifaceted economic benefits to Ottawa County communities.

The allocation of funds for the annual operation and maintenance of the Parks covers expenses ranging from staff salaries to the purchase of goods and services required for park maintenance, operations, and management. It creates a reliable, steady flow of money into the local economy. Construction spending injects an additional, albeit periodic and temporary, influx of capital. This spending supports local jobs and businesses in the construction and landscaping industries, and often requires the procurement of materials and services from within the County, further bolstering the local economy.

Both forms of spending contribute to the economy of the County, fostering growth and stability in the regional economy through continuous investment in its natural assets.

#### **Economic Data and Assumptions**

Crowe used IMPLAN modeling data and software to forecast total economic impact scenarios. The IMPLAN model is a nationally recognized source for economic data and impact analysis modeling. Total economic impact is derived as the sum of the following impact areas:

- Direct: Initial effects to local industry or industries due to the activity or policy being analyzed
- Indirect: Effects stemming from business-to-business purchases in the supply chain taking place in the region
- <u>Induced</u>: Effects in the region stemming from household spending of income after removal of taxes, savings, and commuters

IMPLAN industry multipliers were used to show the effect of the OCPRC and Ottawa Sands annual budget expenditures and the Grand River Greenway and Ottawa Sands construction project expenditures on activity generation in economic output (dollars spent) and employment. The following analysis considers direct, indirect, and induced economic impacts in terms of output and employment. Direct, indirect, induced, and total impacts are defined as follows:

- Direct Effect amount of expenditures associated with the transaction
- Indirect Effect secondary transactions that result from direct expenditures
- Induced Effect money that is recirculated through the economy due to household spending
- Total Effect the sum of direct, indirect, and induced effects
- Employment number of jobs per year resulting from the estimated budget amounts
- Labor Income all forms of income including wages and benefits that result from direct, indirect, and induced spending
- Total Value Added the difference between total costs and the cost of producing an item (measure of the contribution to GDP)
- **Output** is a term used by economists to describe economic activity; it is often referred to as production or sales revenue.

Total impact calculated by IMPLAN, and based on inputs and direction from OCPRC, is defined as the sum of direct, indirect, and induced impacts. Each impact area for OCPRC's and Ottawa Sands' budgets and the associated Grand River Greenway and Ottawa Sands Construction Projects (Employment, Labor Income, and Total Value Added) are addressed in the following exhibits.

See also 'Supplemental – Project Inputs, Outputs, and Assumptions' for list of inputs and time periods utilized in IMPLAN.

Spending associated with the annual Parks budget supports more than 54 permanent jobs and generates over \$6.2 million in economic activity within the County, each year (based on Parks 2024 budget).

Exhibit 2.1: IMPLAN Estimated Ottawa County Parks 2024 Budget Impact							
Impact	Employment	L	abor Income		/alue Added		Output
Direct	45.25	\$	3,309,395.82	\$	4,205,847.43	\$	4,757,770.41
Indirect	1.98		100,259.14		155,676.82		341,345.02
Induced	7.02		305,393.80		641,143.08		1,119,342.46
	54.25	\$	3,715,048.77	\$	5,002,667.33	\$	6,218,457.88

The expected increase in the annual Parks budget for Ottawa Sands will support another permanent job and generate an additional \$171 thousand in economic activity within the County each year (based on Ottawa Sands 65% Capacity Budget estimates).

Exhibit 2.2: IMPLAN Estimated Ottawa Sands Budget Impact (65% Capacity)							
Impact	Employment	La	bor Income	V	alue Added		Output
Direct	1.19	\$	85,210.31	\$	109,020.44	\$	129,404.52
Indirect	0.07		3,702.85		5,749.59		12,606.84
Induced	0.18		8,012.55		16,822.15		<u>29,369.18</u>
	1.44	\$	96,925.72	\$	131,592.17	\$	171,380.54

Construction spending on Grand River Greenway projects, covering 2018 through 2022, supported about 57 temporary jobs and generated \$7.2 million in economic activity within the County, over the five-year period.

Exhbit 2.3: IMPLAN Grand River Greenway Construction Impact (1)							
Impact	Employment	L	abor Income	Ì	/alue Added		Output
Direct	44.94	\$	2,790,024.15	\$	2,857,608.96	\$	5,120,800.91
Indirect	4.70		276,823.22		461,055.79		974,875.42
Induced	7.58		316,744.18		665,949.68		1,160,188.27
	57.22	\$	3,383,591.55	\$	3,984,614.43	\$	7,255,864.59

(1) The impact data was based on the following projects: M-231 Connector, Grand Valley State University & Grand Ravines Connector, Bend Area Connector, Jenison Mill Trail and Grand Ravines & Grand River Park.

Construction spending on Ottawa Sands projects, covering 2023 through 2024, supported over 77 temporary jobs and generated \$10.3 million in economic activity within the County over the two-year period.

Exhbit 2.4: IMPLAN Ottawa Sands Construction Impact (1)						
Impact	Output					
Direct	60.76	\$ 3,755,785.33	\$ 4,077,011.91	\$ 7,353,991.25		
Indirect	7.01	417,999.48	701,725.51	1,471,924.97		
Induced	9.66	420,064.18	882,205.52	1,539,211.51		
	77.43	\$ 4,593,848.99	\$ 5,660,942.94	\$ 10,365,127.73		

(1) The impact data was based on the following projects: Wetland Restoration (habit and shoreline restoration), Lake Loop, Phase I Treehouse and Yurt improvements and restroom building.

#### 3. Community Tourism Benefits

Ottawa County parks are a significant tourist attraction, drawing hundreds of thousands of non-residents and their spending to the County each year. The presence of multiple parks offering different experiences encourages longer stays as visitors explore the variety of landscapes and amenities, leading to increased spending in the community. Based on 2023 park visitation data and 2022 West Michigan Region tourism data, the Parks currently drive over \$24 million in tourist spending into the County each year, which supports nearly 900 jobs. Over the next 4 to 5 years, almost \$2.6 million in additional annual tourist spending is estimated to be generated due to the completion of the Ottawa Sands and Grand River Greenway Projects.

Exhibit 3.1: Baseline Annual Tourist Spending		
Current Annual Park Tourist Visits (1)		412,813
Times: Weighted Average % of Visits with Post-Visit Spending		
Indicators (2)		36.12%
Times: Average Spend per Tourist Visit (3)	\$	162.33
Total Annual Tourist Spend	\$24	4,204,711

(1) Based on 2023 Placer.Al data provided by OCPRC. 'Tourist' represents visitors living at least 25 miles away from the park visited.

(2) Represents portion of visitors who visited a place of business after visiting a park. Weighted based on each park's proportional share of total tourist visits. Based on 2023 Placer.Al data provided by OCPRC.

(3) Represents the average spend per tourist visit to the Parks. Based on Pure Michigan's 2022 'Travel USA Visitation Report' and 'Tourism Economic Impact' reports, West Michigan Region data.

Exhibit 3.2: Estimated Additional Annual Tourist Spen Due to Completion of Ottawa Sands Project	ding	
Estimated Total Annual Visits (1)		60,000
Times: Estimated % of Tourist Visits (2)		45%
Estimated Annual Park Tourist Visits		27,000
Times: Estimated % of Visits with Post-Visit Spending Indicators (2)		45.00%
Times: Average Spend per Tourist Visit (4)	\$	162.33
Total Annual Tourist Spend	\$	1,972,310

Note: The above exhibit includes the total estimated tourist visits following the completion of the Ottawa Sands Project. The Ottawa Sands 'Current Annual Tourist Visits' are <u>not</u> captured in Exhibit 3.1.

(1) Represents the estimated, stabilized Ottawa Sands annual visit count over a 4 to 5 year time horizon. Based on comparable parks' visitation data. Provided by OCPRC.

- (2) Represents the estimated portion of total annual visits from tourists. Based on comparable parks' visitation data. Provided by OCPRC.
- (3) Represents the estimated portion of visits that will exhibit post-visit spending indicators. Based on comparable parks' visitation data. Provided by OCPRC.
- (4) Most recent West Michigan Region average spend per tourist visit. Based on Pure Michigan's 2022 'Travel USA Visitation Report' and 'Tourism Economic Impact' reports.

Exhibit 3.3: Estimated Additional Annual Tourist Spen Due to Completion of Grand River Greenway Project	
Current Annual Tourist Visits (1)	
Grand Ravines	36,440
Grand River Park	6,819
Bass River Recreation Area (2)	6,622
Total Current Annual Tourist Visits	49,881
Times: Estimated % Increase in Visits Due to Completion (3)	15%
Initial Estimated Increase in Annual Tourist Visits	7,482
Plus: Bass River Reacreation Area % Tourist Visits Adjustment (4)	8,063
Total Estimated Additional Annual Park Tourist Visits	15,545
Times: Estimated Weighted Average % of Visits with Post-Visit	
Spending Indicators (5)	24.28%
Times: Average Spend per Tourist Visit (6)	\$ 162.33
Total Annual Tourist Spend	\$ 612,601

Note: The above exhibit only includes the estimated <u>increase</u> in tourist visits due to the completion of the Grand River Greenway Projects. The Grand Ravines & Grand River Park 'Current Annual Tourist Visits' are already captured in Exhibit 3.1.

- (1) Based on 2023 Placer.Al data provided by OCPRC. 'Tourist' represents visitors living at least 25 miles away from the park visited.
- (2) While Bass River Recreation Area is a Michigan State Park, the Grand River Greenway Projects will interconnect the park to other county parks via new trails thus it was included in this analysis. Provided by OCPRC.
- (3) Represents the estimated increase in visits due to the added trails and interconnectivity effect over a 4 to 5 year time horizon. Provided by OCPRC.
- (4) Represents an estimated adjustment to the Bass River Recreation Areas portion of tourist visits due to the project. Based on comparable parks visitation data. Provided by OCPRC.
- (5) Represents the estimated portion of additional visits that will exhibit post-visit spending indicators. Weighted based on the above parks' proportional share of tourist visits. Based on 2023 Placer.Al data.
- (6) Most recent West Michigan Region average spend per tourist visit. Based on Pure Michigan's 2022 'Travel USA Visitation Report' and 'Tourism Economic Impact' reports.

nt
412,813
0.002164
893.33

(1) Based on 2023 Placer.Al data provided by OCPRC. 'Tourist' represents visitors living at least 25 miles away from the park visited.

(2) Represents the total 'Tourism-Supported Employment' per tourist visit. Based on Pure Michigan's 2022 'Travel USA Visitation Report' and 'Tourism Economic Impact' reports, West Michigan Region data.

#### 4. Community Property Value Benefits

In addition to the economic and employment impacts derived from the Parks and the resulting tourism, residential properties located within close proximity to parks may experience an increase in value due to the aesthetic appeal, recreational opportunities, and improved quality of life that parks provide. This park "proximity premium" can lead to higher property values for homes within a 500-foot radius of a park, as green spaces are highly desirable for homeowners seeking a serene environment and community amenities. Consequently, as property values rise, property taxes which are based on the taxable value of the property, also increase.

To validate the reasonableness of including this analysis in this Report, we first conducted a literature review of existing research that explores the relationship between parks and property values<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>. This review suggested reliable evidence suggesting a generally positive relationship between the proximity of a park and nearby property values. Next, we conducted a review of the methods and findings of recent case studies conducting similar analyses to this Report<sup>5 6 7</sup>. The reviewed case studies varied significantly between one another in the methodology used but, in general, included assumptions and used simpler methodologies compared to the research literature.

Crowe developed a methodology based on the reviewed literature and case studies that all of them to develop a methodology that was feasible and would yield reasonable results. This method began with *calculating*, rather than assuming, a proximity premium. The calculation compared the median assessed values of only residential properties within 500 ft of a park to those within a quarter mile of a park to ensure a more like-for-like comparison of residential properties instead of using the county-wide median. The resulting ratio (the "Proximity Premium within 500 Feet") was then used to estimate the proportion of current property values assumed to be fully derived due to their proximity to a Park.

The reviewed literature and case studies focused on parks in more densely populated areas (urban, near urban, or suburban). In contrast, many of Ottawa County's parks are within less densely populated areas and serve as regional destinations. While parks in less densely populated areas may generate a 'regional' impact on property values – and several drove a larger portion of tourism – during our analysis, we did not find evidence of a reliable proximity-based property value premium. To account for this, the below exhibits address the proximity-based property value benefits of a subset of the Parks, selected by OCPRC (see next paragraph and footnote (2)).

With the understanding that previous proximity analyses for other communities focused on parks within more densely populated, established urban or suburban residential neighborhoods, OCPRC staff selected five parks most similar to parks included in these other studies. Out of the over 40 sites managed by the OCPRC, the "Select Parks" were the only ones that fit this criteria. Specifically, each of the Select Parks are located within more densely populated, established residential communities with

 <sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Crompton, J. L., & Nicholls, S. (2019). Impact on property values of distance to parks and open spaces: An update of U.S. studies in the new millennium. *Journal of Leisure Research*, *51*(2), 127–146. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2019.1637704">https://doi.org/10.1080/00222216.2019.1637704</a>.
 <sup>2</sup> Crompton, John. (2004). THE PROXIMATE PRINCIPLE: The Impact of Parks, Open Space and Water Features on Residential Property Values and the Property Tax Base.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Hofe, Rainer & Mihaescu, Oana & Boorn, Mary. (2018). Are homeowners willing to pay more for access to parks? Evidence from a spatial hedonic study of the Cincinnati, Ohio, USA park system. Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Konijnendijk, Cecil & van den Bosch, Matilda & Nielsen, Anders & Maruthaveeran, Sreetheran. (2013). Benefits of Urban Parks A systematic review - A Report for IFPRA.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The Economic Benefits of Huron-Clinton Metroparks. The Trust for Public Land. (October 2020).

https://www.metroparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCMA\_Economic\_Benefits.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Indy Parks Economic Impact Study. Indiana University Public Policy Institute. (May 2021). <u>https://policyinstitute.iu.edu/doc/Indy-Parks-Report-2021.pdf</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> The Value of the Grand River Corridor: The Economic, Fiscal, and Quality of Life Benefits of an Enhanced Regional Riverfront Amenity. HR&A. (February 2021). <u>https://s3.amazonaws.com/downtowngr.org/general/The-Value-of-Grand-River-Corridor.pdf?mtime=20230227101123&focal=none.</u>

relatively small lot sizes and the Select Parks have been in existence for a period of over a decade.

Since only a subset of the Parks were included within the following calculations, the resulting 'Proximity Premium' <u>can not</u> be extrapolated to other existing or future Parks.

Exhibit 4.1: Residential Proximity Premium Due to Proximity to Select Parks (1) (2)		
Median Residential Parcel Assessed Value within "" of Selec	t Park	(S:
500 Feet	\$	159,500
Quarter Mile		132,200
Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (\$) (3)	\$	27,300
Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (%) (3)		17.12%

(1) Only parcels coded as 'Residential' parcels within county parcel records are included. This represents all parcels with class codes 401-409.

(2) Select Parks' represents the Parks which were selected for the parcel analysis including: (i) Hager Park, (ii) Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, (iii) North Ottawa Dunes, (iv) Paw Paw Park, (v) Rosy Mound Natural Area.

(3) 'Proximity Premium' represents the comparatively higher median assessed value of residential parcels within 500 feet of Select Parks versus one quarter (1/4) mile of Select Parks. The difference is assumed to be solely due to the disparate proximities to Select Parks.

Exhibit 4.2: Residential Premium Assessed Val Due to Proximity to Select Parks (1) (2)	ue
2023 Total Assessed Value of Residential Parcels within 500 Feet of Select Parks	\$ 242,229,500
Times: Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (%) (3)	17.12%
Total Premium Assessed Value (4)	\$ 41,469,690

(1) Only parcels coded as 'Residential' parcels within county parcel records are included. This represents all parcels with class codes 401-409.

(2) 'Select Parks' represents the Parks which were selected for the parcel analysis including: (i) Hager Park, (ii) Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, (iii) North Ottawa Dunes, (iv) Paw Paw Park, (v) Rosy Mound Natural Area.

(3) 'Proximity Premium' represents the comparatively higher median assessed value of residential parcels within 500 feet of Select Parks versus one quarter (1/4) mile of Select Parks. The difference is assumed to be solely due to the disparate proximities to Select Parks.

(4) Represents additional assessed value of residential parcels within 500 feet of Select Parks assumed to be solely due to their proximity to Select Parks.

Exhibit 4.3: Residential Premium Taxable Value & Annual P Due to Proximity to Select Parks (1) (2)	rop	erty Taxes
2023 Total Taxable Value of Residential Parcels within 500 Feet of Select Parks Times: Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (%) (3)	\$	169,401,948 17.12%
Premium Taxable Value (4)	\$	29,001,613
Premium Annual Property Taxes (5)	\$	1,029,297

(1) Only parcels coded as 'Residential' parcels within county parcel records are included. This represents all parcels with class codes 401-409.

(2) Select Parks' represents the Parks which were selected for the parcel analysis including: (i) Hager Park, (ii) Historic Ottawa Beach Parks, (iii) North Ottawa Dunes, (iv) Paw Paw Park, (v) Rosy Mound Natural Area.

(3) 'Proximity Premium' represents the comparatively higher median assessed value of residential parcels within 500 feet of Select Parks versus one quarter (1/4) mile of Select Parks. The difference is assumed to be solely due to the disparate proximities to Select Parks.

(4) Represents additional taxable value of residential parcels within 500 feet of Select Parks assumed to be solely due to their proximity to Select Parks.

(5) Calculated at parcel level based on each parcel's (i) premium taxable value, (ii) PRE status, and (iii) effective millage rate.

### **Community Non-Monetary Benefits**

Beyond their economic and employment impacts, the Parks are at the core of community enrichment, offering a wealth of non-monetary benefits that enhance the quality of life for residents.

The Parks' green spaces, beaches, and forests serve as centers for recreation, providing a diverse array of activities that accommodate to individuals of all ages and interests. In addition to the Parks' recreational advantages, OCPRC provides various programs catering to many demographics and interests. This commitment to providing inclusive and accessible programming is a key factor in fostering a vibrant, active, and connected community through shared experiences in the beauty of the natural environment. Parks not only foster social connections and create a sense of community pride, but they also are instrumental in promoting an active lifestyle and fostering respect for nature.

The health benefits of the Parks cannot be overstated; they are natural oases that encourage physical activity, reduce stress, and provide a refuge for mental well-being, all of which are essential components of a healthy community. The Parks also play a crucial role in attracting and retaining talent in the region, as professionals increasingly prioritize access to quality outdoor spaces when choosing where to live and work. Lastly, the environmental benefits of the Parks are equally significant, as they contribute to biodiversity, help manage stormwater runoff, and improve air quality.

#### 1. Community Recreation & Programming Benefits

The Parks are highly valued amongst Ottawa County residents and sought out by tourists. With an estimated population of slightly more than 300,000 residents,<sup>8</sup> the Parks are visited by nearly 90% of the County's residents at least once each year.<sup>9</sup> The popularity of the parks continues to grow amongst both residents and non-residents. Approximately 811,515 visitors visited the Parks over 1.4 million times in 2023.



(1) Each 'visitor' is a unique person who visited a Park <u>at least</u> once in 2023, and one 'visitor' could contribute multiple 'visits.'

The County's parks along Lake Michigan and the Grand River are most popular amongst visitors, attracting approximately 68% of the Parks' total visitors.

https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ottawacountymichigan/PST045223

<sup>9</sup> Problolsky Research. (March 2024). Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission 2024 Scientific Survey, p. 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> US Census Bureau: Ottawa County Michigan 2023. (n.d.)

Ottawa County Parks	- 2023 Visitation	Data by Green	way
			% of Total
Greenway	2023 Visitors	2023 Visits	Visits
Lake Michigan	384,100	544,800	38.9 %
Grand River	173,915	387,100	27.6
Other	153,600	293,500	20.9
Pigeon River	46,600	81,600	5.8
Macatawa River	42,500	74,500	5.3
Grand River/Lake Michigan	10,800	20,400	1.5
Total	811,515	1,401,900	<u>    100.0</u> %

Ottawa County Park	s - 2023 Top 10 I	Most Visited Parl	ks	
			% of Total	
Park	2023 Visitors	2023 Visits	Visits	
Grand Ravines	92,600	230,300	16.4	%
Tunnel Park	143,000	189,400	13.5	
Hager Park	76,000	146,300	10.4	
Kirk Park	49,000	68,700	4.9	
Rosy Mound	43,600	58,000	4.1	
North Beach Park	39,500	56,200	4.0	
Windnest Park	31,200	54,500	3.9	
Riley Trails	25,800	53,400	3.8	
Spring Grove	31,000	48,500	3.5	
Grand River Park	24,600	47,000	3.4	
Top 10 Total	556,300	952,300	67.9	<u>%</u>
All 27 Other Parks	255,215	449,600	32.1	<u>%</u>

Park visitors also seek out the hundreds of programs offered each year. In 2023, almost 12,000 individuals participated in park programming, including school field trips/programs. These trips provide thousands of students with the opportunity to learn about and connect with nature. In addition to schools, several scouting troops visit the parks each year, creating additional opportunities for youth to enjoy programming experiences at the Parks. Finally, several senior-focused programming (including those held by nursing homes, assisted living homes, etc.) offer seniors the chance to enjoy the outdoors.

Ot	Ottawa County Parks - Public & Private Programs				
	2023	2022	2021	2020	2019
Program Count					
Public	252	263	395	208	216
Private	131	120	78	140	187
<b>Total Programs</b>	383	383	473	348	403
Attendees					
Public	5,984	3,832	3,891	2,298	4,697
Private	5,881	4,447	1,961	3,503	7,202
Total Attendees	11,865	8,279	5,852	5,801	11,899

Ottawa County Parl	ks - Notable	Program Cat	tegories
	2023 (1)	2022	2021
School Programs			
Program Count	91	76	38
Attendees	5,398	3,811	1,415
Scout Programs			
Program Count	2	4	3
Attendees	34	41	30
Senior Programs			
Program Count	20	20	21
Attendees	212	258	198

(1) 2023 'Program Type Detail' data incomplete. Assigned category to 20 programs based on prior year categorization and/or where clearly indicated in program name.

OCPRC-hosted programs deliver educational and nature-related experiences for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities, promoting community engagement and connectivity, while developing respect for the County's natural resources and diverse ecosystems.

#### 2. Community Health Benefits

The Parks play a role in the overall health of the County- improving individuals' physical and mental wellbeing and impacting health care costs.

Parks and green spaces have "public health superpowers" as they promote healthy lifestyles by creating avenues for physical activity, helping to reduce obesity and the risk of numerous diseases.<sup>10</sup> In addition to the physical health benefits, parks provide mental health benefits. Nearly 93% of U.S. adults say that the services and opportunities provided by their local park and recreation department benefits their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Foderaro, L., & Klein, W. (May 24, 2023). Trust for Public Land, *The Power of Parks to Promote Health: A Special Report*. https://www.tpl.org/parks-promote-health-report

mental health.<sup>11</sup> Whether its *forest bathing* in the serenity of nature, going to the park for a family outing, or meeting up with friends for an afternoon hike, parks create opportunities to connect with nature, one another, and engage with the community at large.

The physical and mental benefits of parks can translate to significant health care cost savings. The National Recreation and Park Association, in partnership with the Urban Institute, developed an interactive database estimating the annual health benefits of equitable park access.<sup>12</sup> Crowe leveraged the tool to calculate the reduction of health care expenses when residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park for the five largest Ottawa County communities.

The below exhibit indicates Ottawa County could save more than \$7.1 million annually in health care expenses if the remaining residents of Holland, Allendale, Jenison, Grand Haven, and Hudsonville were within a 10-minute walk to a park.

Health Care Cost Savings of Equitable Park Access			
			Annual Health Care Expense
	Residents within	# of Residents	Reduction if Remaining
	10-minute walk	Outside 10-Minute	Residents Were Within 10-
Community	of a park	Walk to Park	Minute Walk to Park
Holland	69%	10,479	\$ 1,679,432
Allendale	9%	23,530	3,375,402
Jenison	46%	9,001	1,271,968
Grand Haven	67%	3,683	510,571
Hudsonville	74%	1,947	275,917

The County Health Rankings & Roadmaps program of the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute evaluates and compares a variety of health-related data points between communities. Based on 2024 data, results indicate that Ottawa County has among the best health factors and outcomes across the state and country.<sup>13</sup> For example, Ottawa County has lower obesity rates (33%) than Michigan (35%), the United States (34%), and all adjacent counties except Kent County (32%). Additionally, Ottawa County has much lower physical inactivity rates (18%) than Michigan (22%), the United States (23%), and all adjacent counties. It is feasible that the recreational opportunities offered by the Ottawa County Parks has helped improve the county's health.

Other parks systems prepared reports to estimate the health care cost benefits generated due to physical activity in their parks. For example, a 2020 report on Michigan's Huron-Clinton Metroparks estimated that over \$30 million in annual health care costs were saved due to residents engaging in physical activity in the parks.<sup>14</sup> More recently, a 2023 report on the Parish of East Baton Rouge, Louisiana found that residents avoid \$8 million in annual healthcare costs due to exercising in the parks.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, a report prepared for the Houston, Texas Parks Board in 2011 estimated the health benefits of the Bayou

- <sup>11</sup> Mental Health Benefits of Parks and Recreation: Park Pulse. National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.)
- https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/mental-health-benefits-of-parks-and-recreation/.
- <sup>12</sup> 2023 NPRA the health benefits of parks. National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.) <u>https://www.nrpa.org/publications-</u> research/research-papers/the-health-benefits-of-parks-and-their-economic-impacts/2023-npra-the-health-benefits-of-parks/.
- <sup>13</sup> County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/michigan/ottawa?year=2024.
- <sup>14</sup> The Economic Benefits of Huron-Clinton Metroparks. The Trust for Public Land. (October 2020).
- https://www.metroparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCMA\_Economic\_Benefits.pdf.

<sup>15</sup> The Economic Benefits of BREC Parks. The Trust for Public Land. (August 2023). <u>https://www.metroparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCMA Economic Benefits.pdf</u>.

Greenways at \$13.9 million annually.<sup>16</sup> These reports suggest providing low or no cost access to parks can result in millions of dollars in annual health-related benefits for communities.

#### 3. Community Talent Attraction / Retention Benefits

Parks investment provides measurable economic benefits in dollars as previously detailed, as well as in positive economic benefit in the form of talent attraction and retention.

High-quality parks significantly enhance quality of life and promote a strong sense of culture and wellbeing in a community. Ottawa County partner organizations, such as Lakeshore Advantage, attribute quality of life as a key determinant in families' decision to relocate to the County, as well as a key factor in staying in the area long term.

According to the American Planning Association, access to well-maintained parks and recreational facilities is a top priority for residents seeking a high quality of life, which in turn influences professionals choosing where to live and work.<sup>17</sup> In this new age of remote work and increased flexibility in where people live and work, parks can be a main attraction for professional and a cornerstone for improving a region's quality of life. For example, about 84% of U.S. adults indicate proximity to high quality parks and recreation are an important factor when choosing where to live.<sup>18</sup>

As the County continues to grow with changing demographics, it is important to acknowledge the varying desires and priorities people of different ages, backgrounds, socioeconomic status, and abilities have for high-quality parks.

#### 4. Community Environmental Benefits

Parks system success relies strongly on the health of the land, natural resources, and various habitats. Conservation efforts should be prioritized to protect the natural spaces from invasive species and human degradation. Thus, significant human and capital investments are required to maintain the Parks' high-quality resources and facilities and deliver enrichening experiences desired by park visitors. More than five in six U.S. adults support nature-based investments to the local park and recreation agency to support their community's environment and reduce the impact of natural disasters. Top investments for a park and recreation agency include:

- Conserving and restoring coastal habitats, forests, wetlands, and grasslands,
- Restoring and increasing natural spaces to prevent major flood events,
- Planting native plants for pollinators, and
- Creating and expanding urban trees and forests, including green roofs and rain gardens.<sup>19</sup>

Sustainable practices to strengthen water and air quality can have significant, positive impacts on a parks system. About 88% of U.S. adults support their local park and recreation agency implementing sustainability initiatives, such as planting trees and native vegetation, expanding areas of green spaces, and leveraging LED lighting and other energy-efficient products.<sup>20</sup>

https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/home-is-where-a-park-is/

<sup>20</sup> Park Pulse, *Taking action for sustainability*. National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). <u>https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/taking-action-for-sustainability/</u>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Bayou Greenways – A Key to a Healthy Huston. John Crompton & Marsh Darcy Partners, Inc. (August 2011).

http://files.thehighline.org.s3.amazonaws.com/pdf/Houston\_Parks\_Board\_Benefit\_Analysis.pdf.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Lewis, M. (2003, April). *How cities use parks for economic development*. American Planning Association. https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9148668/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> October 2023 Park Pulse, *Home is where a park is.* National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> November 2023 Park Pulse, *Nature-based solutions to climate change*. National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/nature-based-solutions-to-climate-change/

OCPRC continues to steward the land, improving and protecting the County's environmental health of and resources. OCPRC adopted a natural systems philosophy, which prioritizes interconnected networks of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and other natural species by maintaining natural, ecological processes and sustaining air and water resources.<sup>21</sup> This approach is cost effective as it optimizes rainfall and wastewater by reducing, filtering, absorbing, and re-using it at its source.

OCPRC's significant investments in the Grand River Greenway Conservation and Ottawa Sands projects improved and preserved the County's greenways, waterways, and natural communities. The Grand River Greenway Conservation project has preserved more than 3,500 acres of wetlands and 3,750 acres of floodplain to date.<sup>22</sup> OCPRC's regenerative approach to the Ottawa Sands project integrated high performance green infrastructure, removed invasive species, and maintained native landscaping, all of which aided in the restoration and enhancement of 238 acres, approximately 69% of the Ottawa Sands site.<sup>23</sup>

Overall, OCPRC's conservation efforts and strong focus on natural resource management largely contributes to the health and quality of the County's natural communities and resources, thus delivering an immense number of environmental, social, and economic benefits to County residents and tourists alike.

Beyond Ottawa County, many sources show that park systems and green spaces play an essential role in enhancing the environmental quality of the communities they lay within.<sup>24</sup> Parks have been shown to help (i) reduce stormwater runoff and (ii) reduce air pollution.<sup>25</sup> <sup>26</sup>Together these impacts enhance water and air quality, reduce residents' exposure to pollutants, lowers costs of environmental mitigation / management, and improves wildlife habitats.

A report on Michigan's Huron-Clinton Metroparks evaluated the economic value of the park system's benefits to the environment and identified over \$32.5 million in annual environment benefits<sup>27</sup>. First, it found that the parks saved nearby communities over \$30 million annually by reducing stormwater management costs. This stems from the park land's ability to absorb and process a higher volume of stormwater and runoff compared to if its land had been developed similarly to the surrounding region. Second, it found the parks removed \$2.25 million of air pollutants annually, due to the large quantity of trees and shrubs in the parks.

A similar report on Louisiana's Parish of East Baton Rouge estimated that its parks system provided between approximately \$3 million to \$36.3 million in environmental benefits annually<sup>28</sup>. This report provided two discreet estimates on the stormwater related benefits by comparing cost scenarios of using traditional stormwater treatment methods versus new green stormwater infrastructure. It found that the parks generated \$2,943,090 in annual savings when using to traditional stormwater treatment method costs, and \$36,288,721 when using green infrastructure costs. In addition, it found that the parks removed over 100 tons of pollutants annually with a total value of \$51,305.

<sup>26</sup> Air Quality Effects of Urban Trees and Parks. Nowak, David and Heisler, Gordon. (2010) https://www.nrpa.org/globalassets/research/nowak-heisler-summary.pdf.

<sup>27</sup> The Economic Benefits of Huron-Clinton Metroparks. The Trust for Public Land. (October 2020).

https://www.metroparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCMA\_Economic\_Benefits.pdf.

<sup>28</sup> The Economic Benefits of BREC Parks. The Trust for Public Land. (August 2023). <u>https://www.metroparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCMA\_Economic\_Benefits.pdf</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> OCPRC Business Plan and Goals, Idema Explorers Camp at Ottawa Sands Park, p. 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> OCPRC Grand River Greenway Project Update Winter 2024, p. 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> OCPRC Grand River Greenway Project Update Winter 2024, p. 18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Why City Parks Matter. City Parks Alliance. (n.d.) <u>https://cityparksalliance.org/about-us/why-city-parks-matter/</u>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Green Infrastructure in Parks: A Guide to Collaboration, Funding, and Community Engagement. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (June 2017) <u>https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-05/documents/gi\_parksplaybook\_2017-05-01\_508.pdf</u>.

### Disclaimer & Cautions to the Reader

Crowe LLP ("Crowe") makes no representation or warranty as to the accuracy or completeness of the information contained within this Report, including all estimates or extrapolations, and shall have no liability for any representations, expressed or implied, contained herein, or for any omissions from this Report.

In the course of preparing this Report, we have not conducted an audit of any financial or supplemental data used in the accompanying exhibits. We have made certain assumptions and projections that may vary from actual results because events and circumstances frequently do not occur as estimated, and such variances may be material. Certain comparisons within the Report are intended to contextualize data calculated, rather than project current or future results. We have no responsibility to update this Report for events and circumstances occurring after the date of this Report.

The analysis contained in this Report is based on estimates, assumptions, and market information obtained from various industry and regulatory sources and from our knowledge of the industry and other factors. Some of those assumptions inevitably will not materialize and unanticipated events and circumstances may occur; therefore, the actual results achieved may vary from those anticipated in our analysis and these differences may be material.

Changes in the economy can and do occur in a rapid manner. These and other changes can alter the assumptions and conclusions drawn from historical data. Based upon the terms of our engagement, we are not responsible for updating this Report for circumstances that occur after this Report has been released.

Crowe's fees are not dependent upon the outcome of this Report and Crowe is independent with respect to any other economic interests.

## Supplemental – Project Inputs, Outputs, and Assumptions

The following exhibit summarizes the key project inputs including (i) Parks budgeted spending (ii) Parks construction spending, (iii) tourism data, and (iv) property data. All assumptions were discussed with and validated by OCPRC and the source of the information is cited below.

Supplemental Exhibit - Project Inputs, Ou	utputs, and Assump	otions
Data Element	Amount	Source
Ottawa County Park 2024 Expenditure Budget	\$ 6,019,154.3	1 OCPRC
Ottawa Sands Expenditure Budget (65% occupancy)	175,991.0	O OCPRC
Grand River Greenway Projects		
M-231 Connector	1,219,295.3	9 OCPRC
Grand Valley State University & Grand Ravines Connector		
(less easement acquisition)	397,553.0	9 OCPRC
Bend Area Connector	856,138.3	
Jenison Mill Trail	1,370,869.9	1 OCPRC
Grand Ravines & Grand River Park		
(less easement acquisition)	1,276,944.1	6 OCPRC
Ottawa Sands Project		
Wetland Resotoration (Habitat)	441,714.0	OCPRC
Wetland Resotoration (Shoreline)	99,963.0	O OCPRC
Lake Loop	788,314.2	5 OCPRC
Phase 1 Implementation - Treehouse	1,667,000.0	OCPRC
Phase I Implemenation - Yurt Campground	3,847,000.0	OCPRC
Park Restroom Building	510,000.0	OCPRC
Time Period of Analysis	2018-2024	4 OCPRC
Ottawa County Michigan Geographic Region	2022 multiplier da	ta IMPLAN
Tourism Impacts		
Ottawa County Parks, Annual Tourist Visits for Year	2023 visitation da	ta OCPRC; Placer.Al
Ottawa Couty Parks, % of Visits with Post-Visit Spending		
Indicators for Year	2023 visitation da	ta OCPRC; Placer.Al
2022 Total Visitor Spending, West Michigan Region	\$ 4,366,708,68	0 Pure Michigan
2022 Total Person-Trips, West Michigan Region	26,900,00	0 Pure Michigan
2022 Total Tourism Supported Employment, West Michigan		
Region	58,19	9 Pure Michigan
Derived 2022 Average Spend per Visit, West Michigan		Pure Michigan
Region	\$ 162.3	3 (Derived)
Derived 2022 Average Employment-Supported per Visit,		Pure Michigan
West Michigan Region	0.00216	4 (Derived)
2022 Total Visitor Spending, Ottawa County	\$ 425,650,64	8 Pure Michigan
Property Impacts		
"Select Parks" Included in Analysis	5 Parks Selecte	ed OCPRC
County Parcel Records for Year	2023 Parcel Da	ta OCPRC
List of Parcels Within Given Distance to Select Parks (1/4		
Mile; 500 Feet) for Year	2023 Parcel Da	ta OCPRC



## Appendix C: Scientific Survey Executive Summary

OCPRC - Approved -8/21/24 - PR 24 - 58

## Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission 2024 Scientific Survey Executive Results Presentation

April 2024



**Opinion Research on Elections and Public Policy** 



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Newport Beach (949) 855-6400

Appendix C-2

### **Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission – 2024 Scientific Survey**

Survey Methodology\*

	Survey Details
Mode	Phone (landline and mobile) Online (email and text-to-web)
Language	English and Spanish
Length	16 minutes
Target Respondents	Ottawa County voters and non-voters
Survey Fielding	March 6 – 11, 2024
Survey Participants	400
Margin of Error	+/-5%

#### Sample

### **Data Collection Explained**

Interviews were conducted by phone (33%) and online (67%) modes. Phone interviews were conducted via landline (34%) or mobile (66%). Online participants were invited by email (50%) and text message (50%).

Respondents in all modes chose their preferred language, English (98%) and Spanish (2%).

The online survey was accessible by computer, tablet, and smart phone.

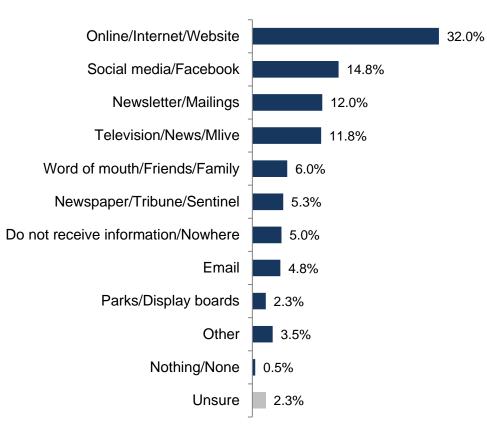
Security measures precluded individuals from completing the survey more than once.



Probolsky Research is a Latina- and woman-owned market and opinion research firm with corporate, election, government, and non-profit clients.

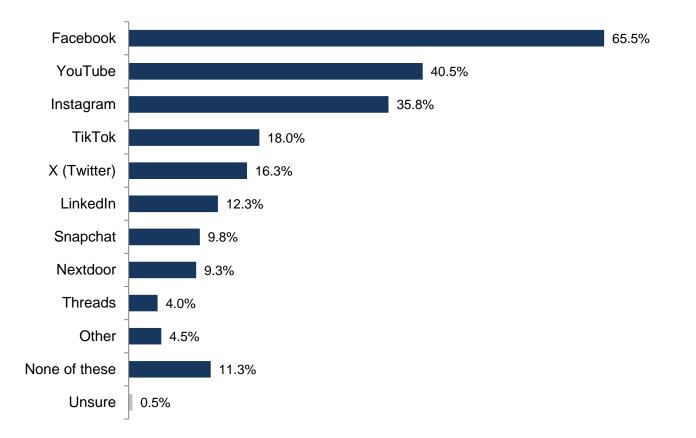
CPRC - Approved -8/21/24 - PR 24 – 58

Question 1: Where would you say you get most of your information about the activities of Ottawa County Parks? [OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]

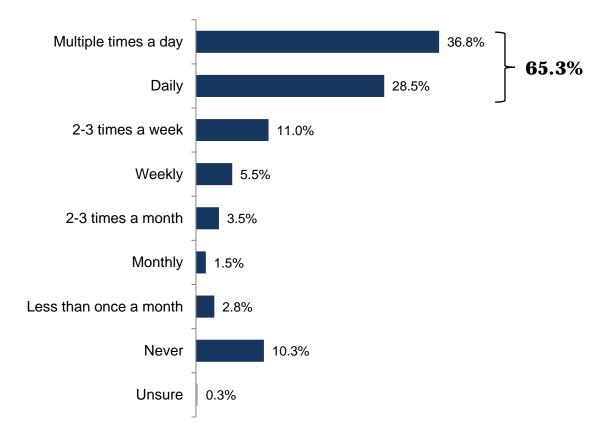




Question 2: Please indicate which, if any, of these social apps and websites you use regularly. Select all that apply.

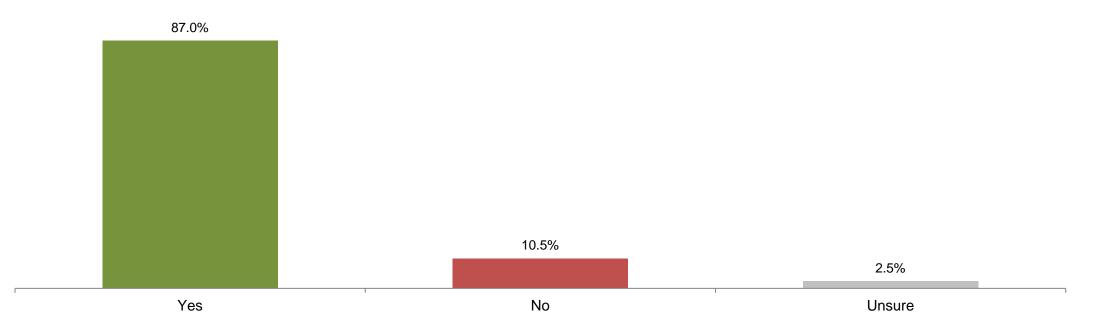


Question 3: How often do you use social media apps or websites such as Facebook, Instagram, or X (Twitter)?



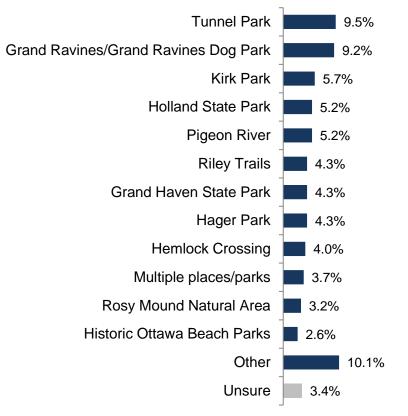


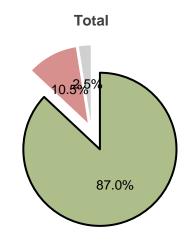
Question 4: In the past year, have you or anyone else in your household visited any Ottawa County parks or open spaces?





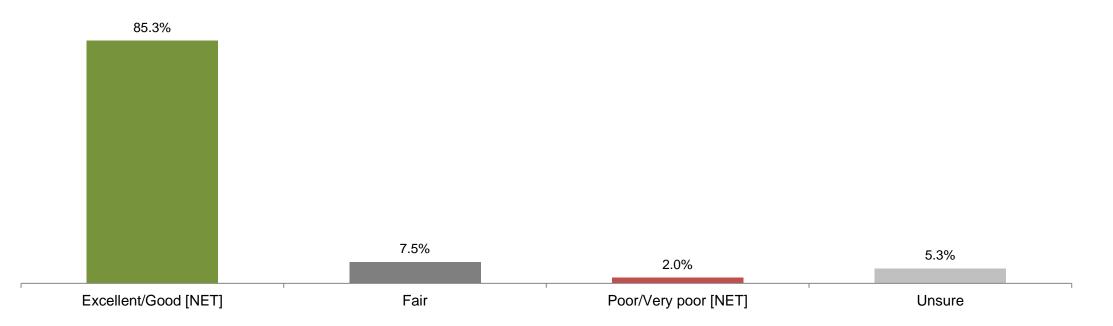
Question 5: What is the name of the park(s) or open space(s) you visited in Ottawa County? [IF ANSWERED 'YES' TO Q4] [OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]





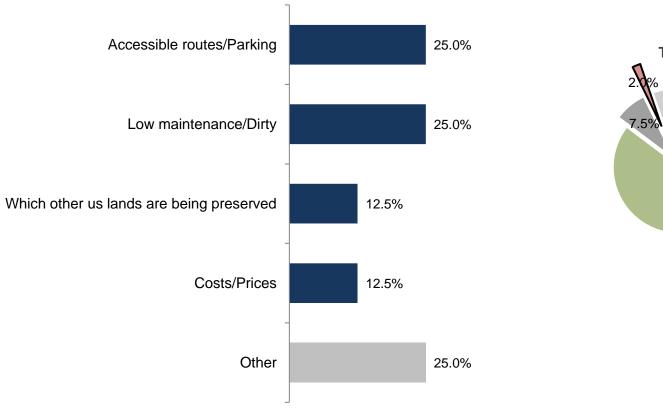


Question 6: Keeping in mind what you may know or have heard or read about parks and other recreational opportunities provided in other nearby counties, how would you rate the job being done by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission in conserving natural lands, providing recreational opportunities and programs to the citizens of Ottawa County -- would you give a positive rating of excellent or good, a fair rating, or a negative rating of poor or very poor?





#### Question 7: What stands out for you as the main reason why you offered a rating of poor? [IF ANSWERED 'POOR/VERY POOR' TO Q6] [OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]



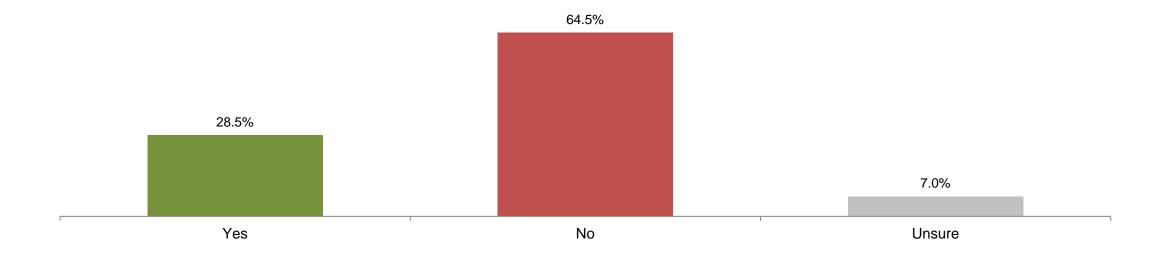


Total

5.3%

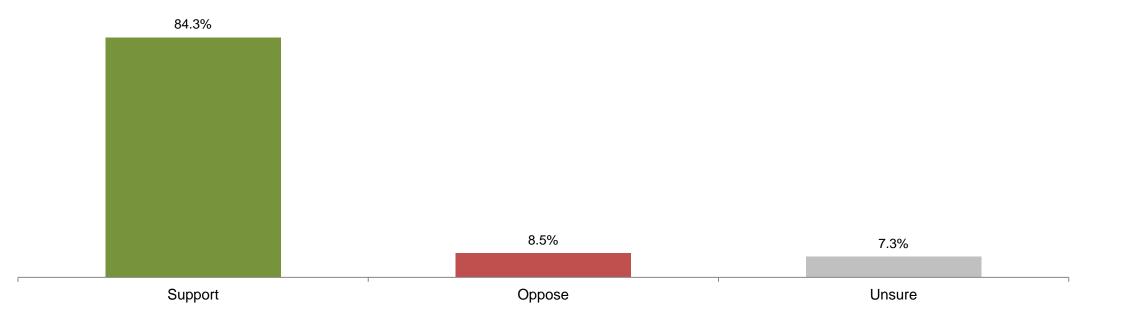
85.3%

Question 8: Were you aware that there is currently a special millage, renewed in 2016, in the amount of 1/3 of a mill, that is dedicated specifically to help fund Ottawa County parks?



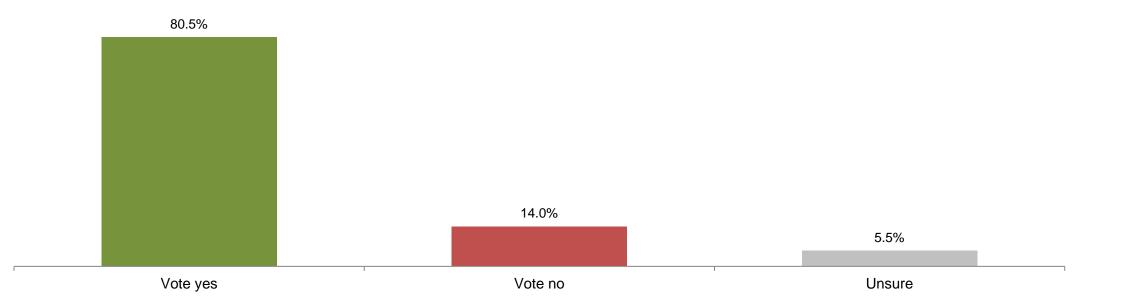


Question 9: The 1/3 of a mill amounts to \$25 per year for a house valued at \$150,000 with a taxable value of \$75,000. Generally speaking, do you support or oppose the current parks millage?



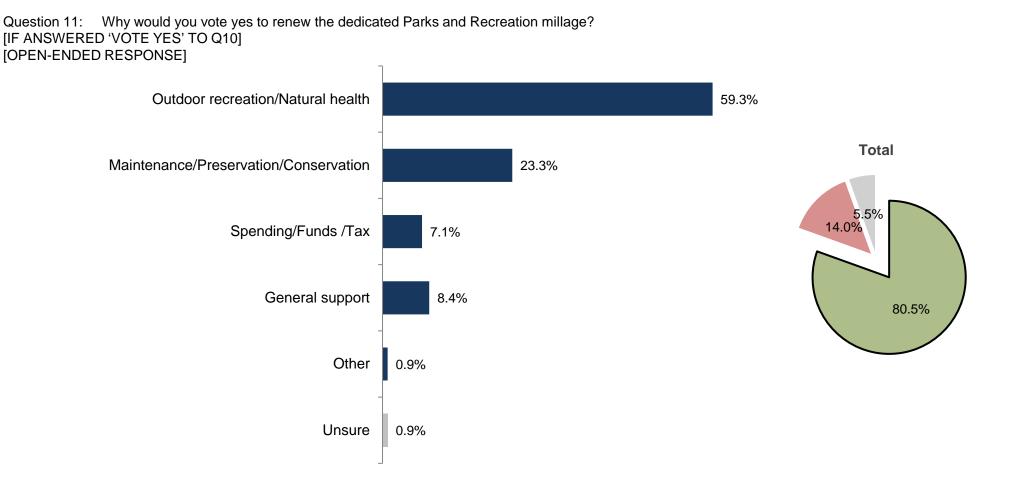


Question 10: If Ottawa County placed a renewal of the 1/3 of a mill on a future election ballot, which amounts to \$25 per year for a house valued at \$150,000 with a taxable value of \$75,000, and the election were being held today, would you vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage, or would you vote no to oppose it?



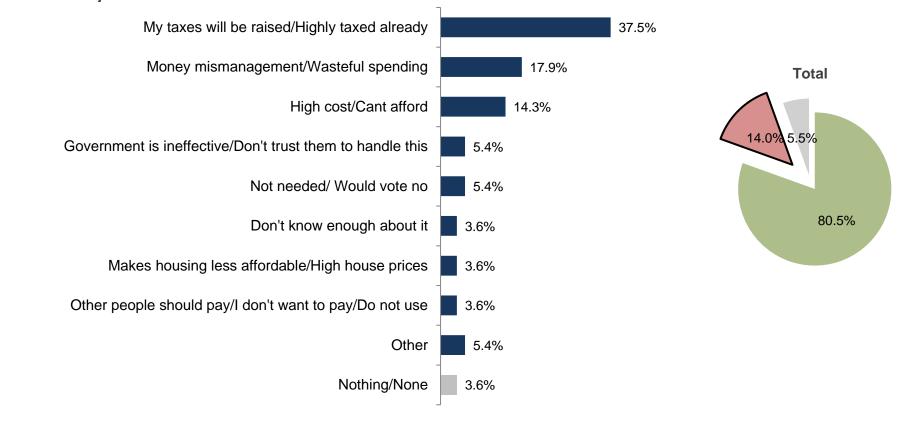


### \_\_\_\_\_ to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage, 59% cite the need for outdoor recreation



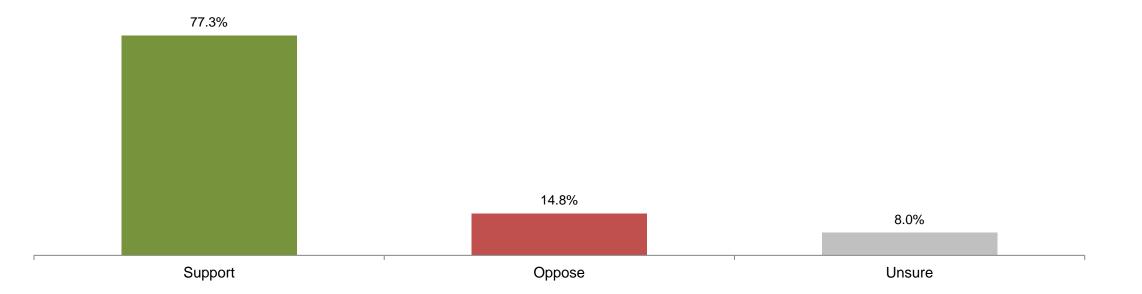
## \_\_\_\_\_\_ to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage, 38% cite tax concerns

Question 12: Why would you vote no to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage? [IF ANSWERED 'VOTE NO' TO Q10] [OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]



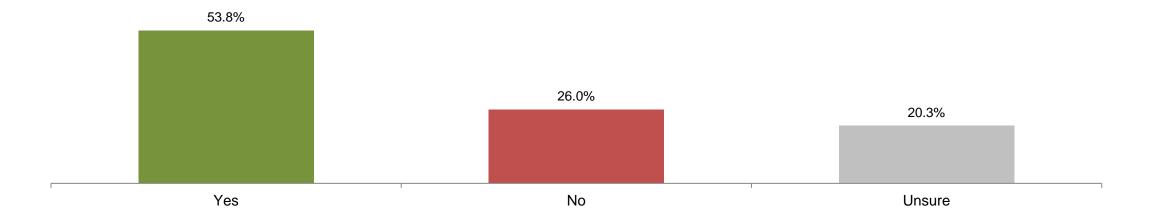


Question 13: Would you support or oppose an increased millage that would focus on the protection and management of the County's most sensitive natural resources, expanded outdoor education, and development of new natural resources-based recreation facilities and trails?



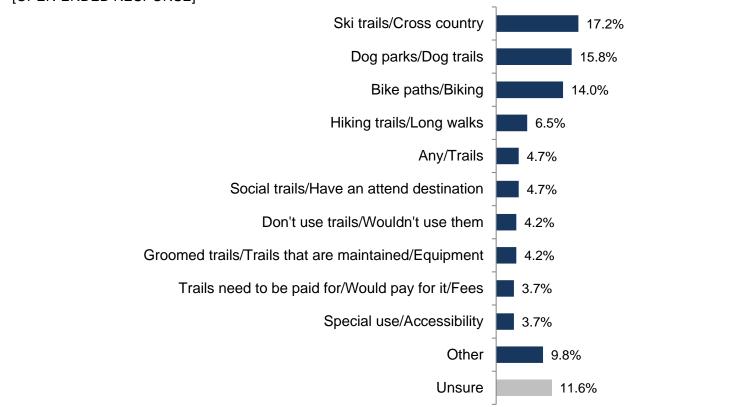


Question 14: There are parks that cost more to operate due to special features offered at the park such as groomed cross-country ski trails, dog parks, or mountain biking trails. Would you support a cost recovery initiative such as a user fee to fund the operations and maintenance of these special facilities?





Question 15: What type of trail/facility would you consider paying a user fee to help cover the operations and maintenance costs? [[IF ANSWERED 'YES' TO Q14] [OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]





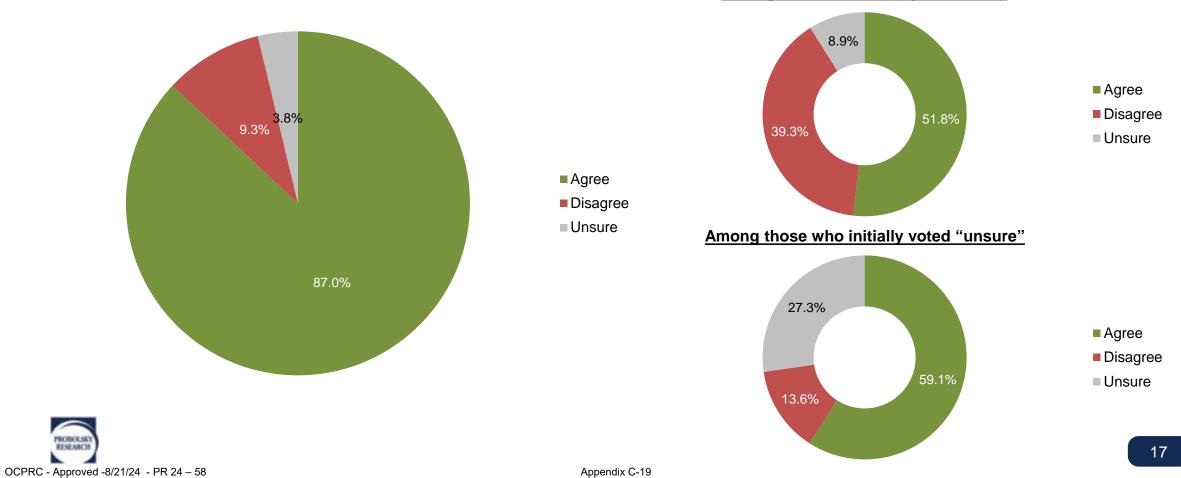
Total

53.8%

20.3%

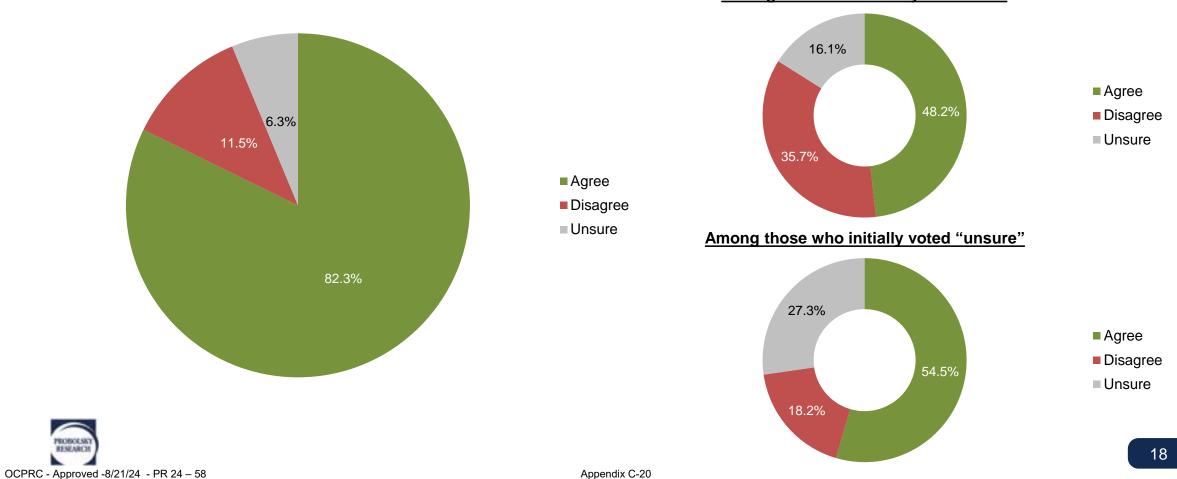
26.0%

Question 16: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should protect additional land and natural spaces for conservation of key natural features, habitat, natural communities as well as future public access.



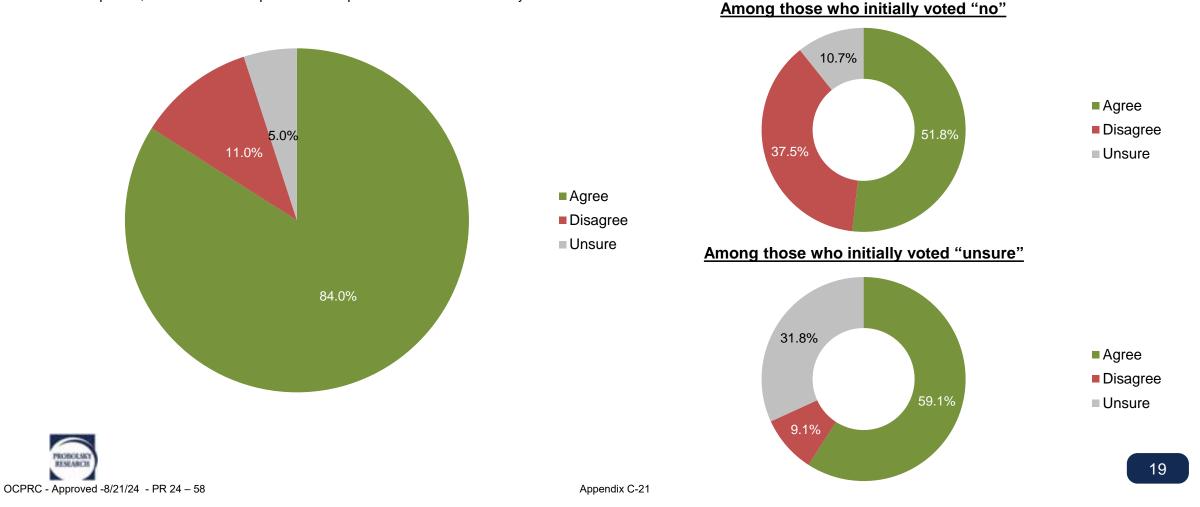
PROBOLIST RESEARCH Among those who initially voted "no"

Question 17: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide leadership in completing a County-wide regional multi-use trail system linking different communities.

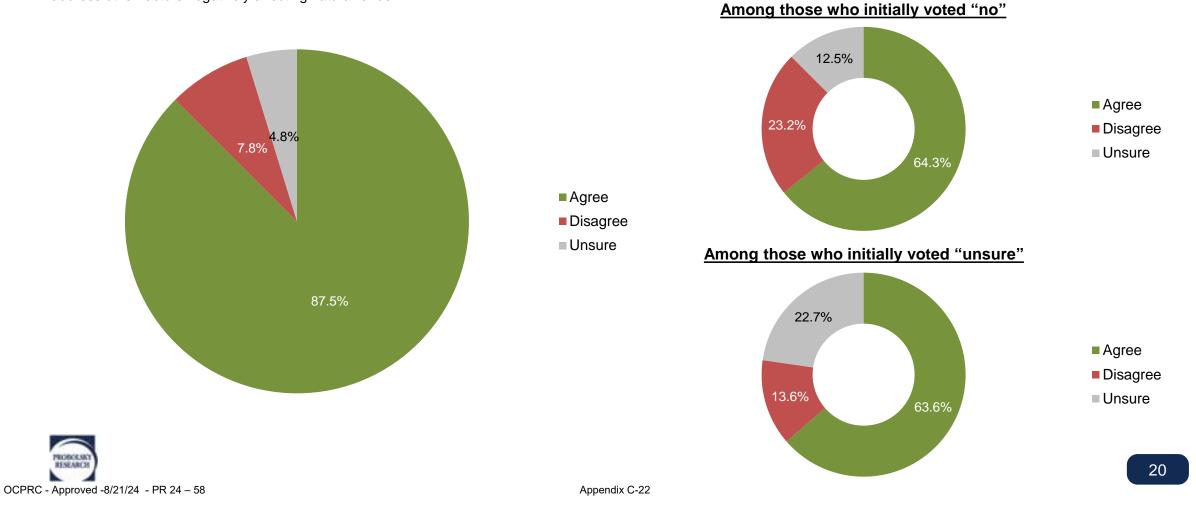


PROBOLING RESEARCH Among those who initially voted "no"

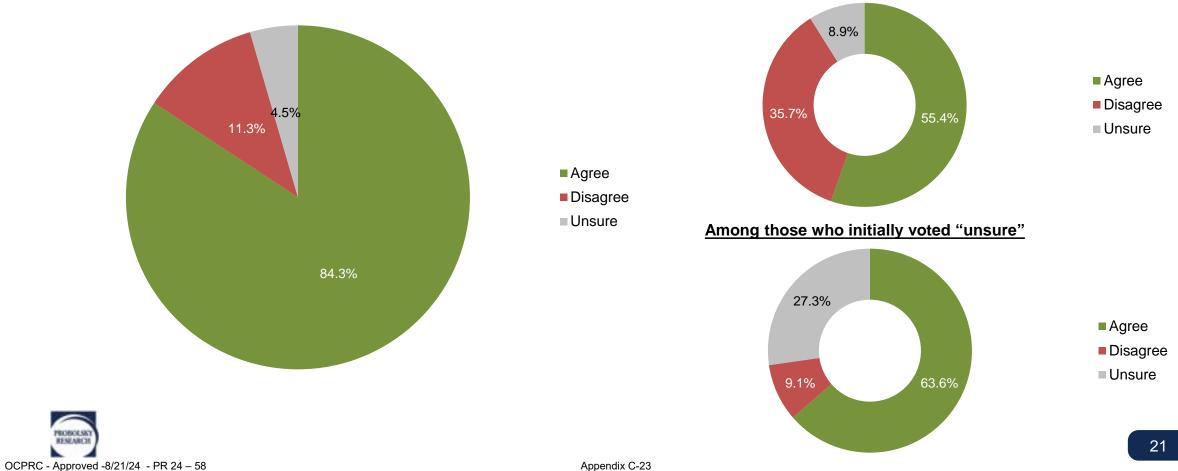
Question 18: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide leadership in dedicating resources to undertake significant habitat restoration and green infrastructure projects to improve water quality, increase native species, and increase and protect native plant and animal biodiversity.



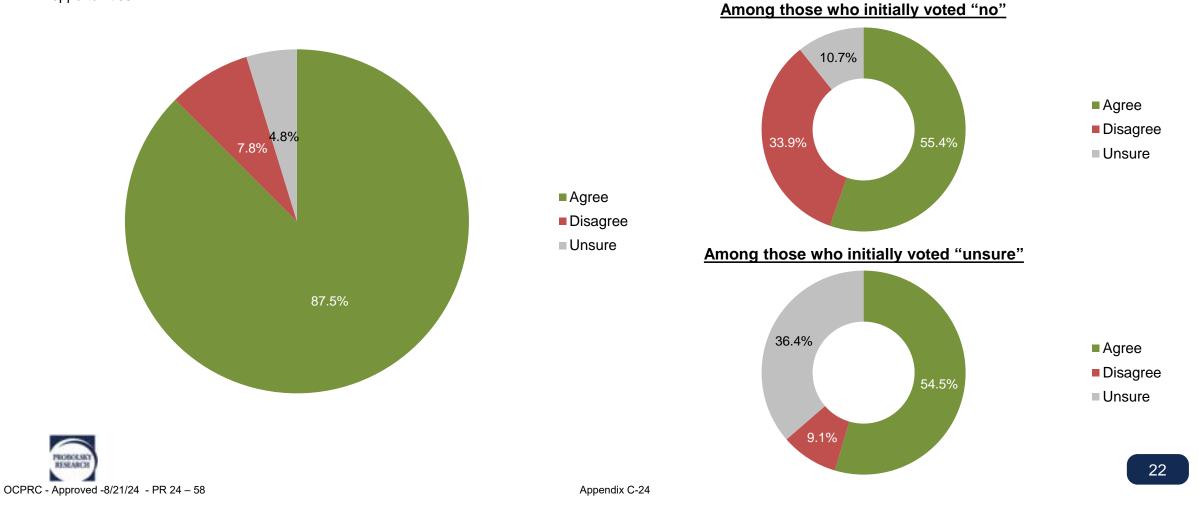
Question 19: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide leadership in management of natural lands in Ottawa County to control invasive species and/or overpopulated species (such as deer) or to address other factors negatively affecting natural lands.



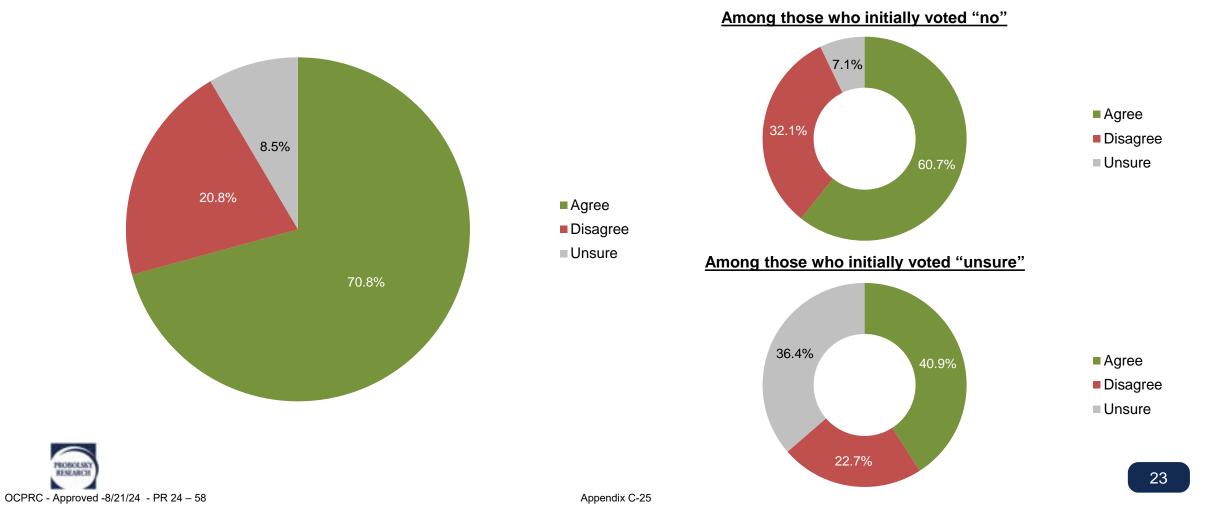
Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Question 20: Parks Commission should provide community-wide leadership in engaging the public to experience nature through outdoor education, recreational programs, and volunteer opportunities. Among those who initially voted "no"



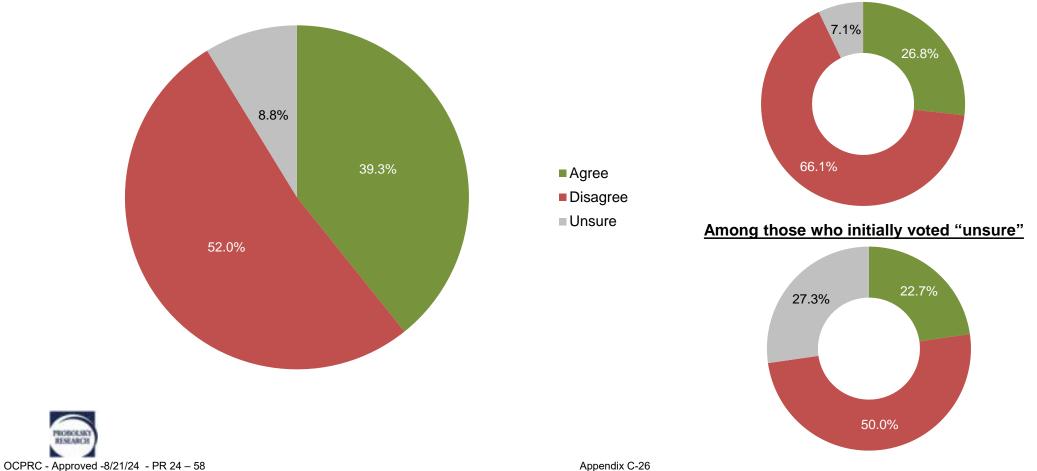
PROBOLING RESEARCH Question 21: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide community-wide leadership in ensuring that students get exposure to the outdoors through curriculum-based field trips and service-based learning opportunities.



Question 22: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should help finance the parks systems by providing revenue-generating facilities such as large event facilities, picnic shelters, campgrounds, and marinas.



Question 23: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should dedicate resources to provide high quality venues suitable for weddings or other formal events, even if these events and venues are more costly and laborintensive.



PROBOLING RESEARCH Among those who initially voted "no"

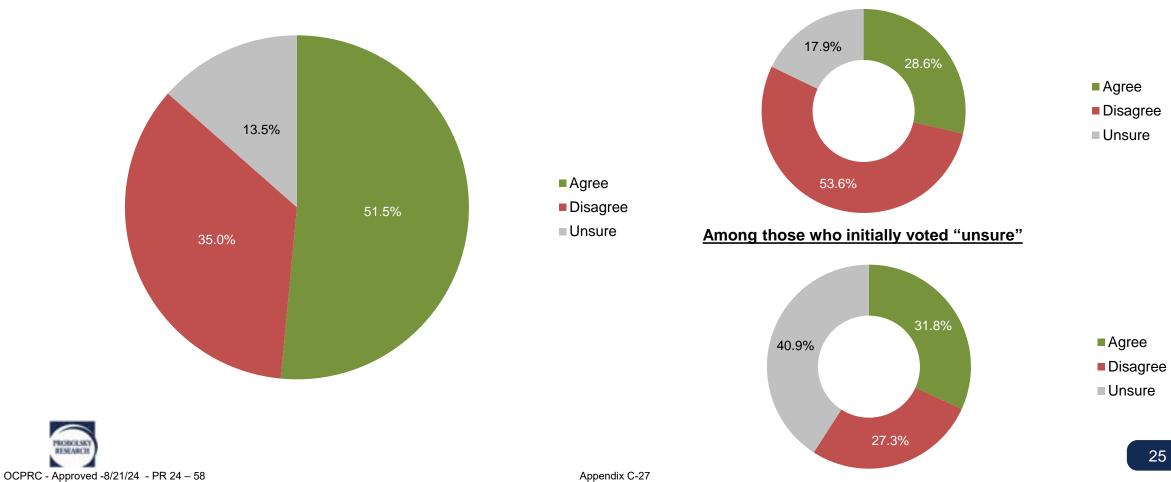
Agree Disagree

Unsure

Agree

Disagree Unsure

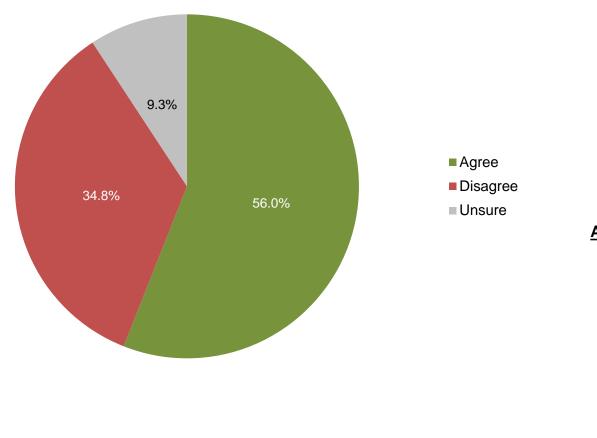
Question 24: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide overnight camping facilities that can accommodate RV's.



PROBOLIST RESEARCH

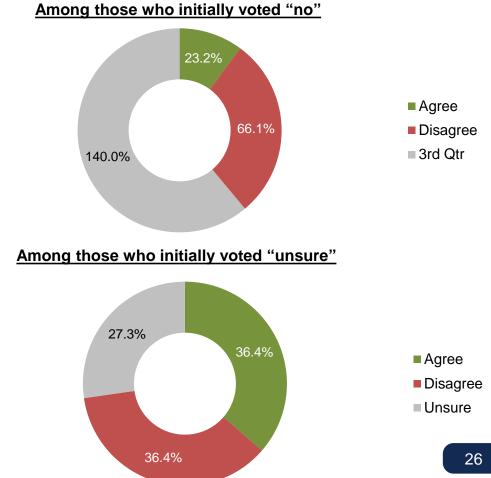
Among those who initially voted "no"

Question 25: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide additional unique "experience-based" camping that include facilities such as yurts, treehouses, and walk-in tent sites that are being constructed at Ottawa Sands.



PROBOLISIO

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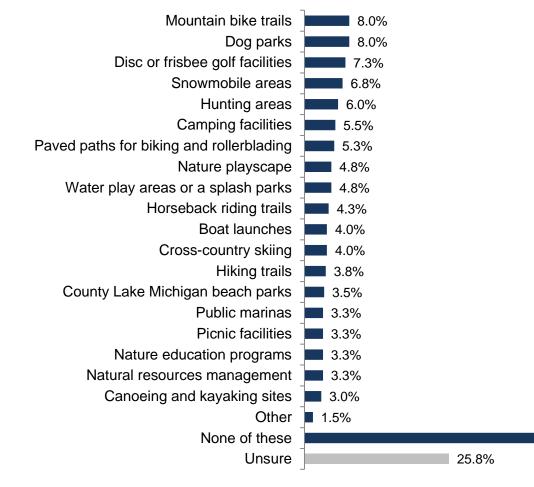


## **Protecting additional land and natural spaces for conservation is the initiative with the highest intensity**

	7	
Protect additional land and natural spaces for conservation	Strongly 57.8%	29.3%
Ensure that students get exposure to the outdoors through curriculum-based field trips	Strongly 54.3%	33.3%
Control invasive species and/or overpopulated species	Strongly 50.5%	37.0%
Undertake significant habitat restoration and green infrastructure projects	Strongly 49.8%	34.3%
Engage the public to experience nature through outdoor education	Strongly 48.0%	36.3%
Complete a County-wide regional multi-use trail system	Strongly 43.5%	38.8%
Help finance the parks systems by providing revenue- generating facilities	Strongly 29.5% 41.3	3%
Provide additional unique "experience-based" camping	Strongly 23.5% 32.5%	
Provide overnight camping facilities that can accommodate RV's	Strongly 20.0% 31.5%	I
Provide high quality venues suitable for weddings or other formal events	Strongly 14.3% 25.0%	



Question 26: Which of the following park facilities and recreational programming opportunities would you say the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission currently provides too many of? Select all that apply.

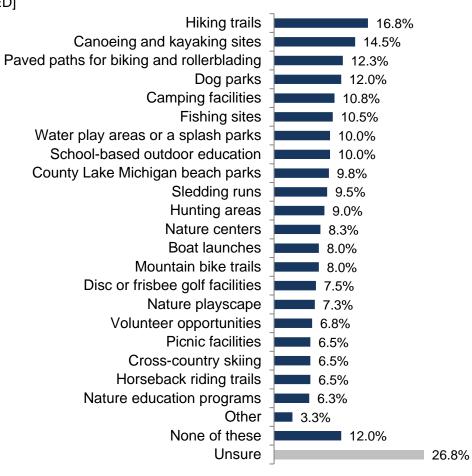




Appendix C-30

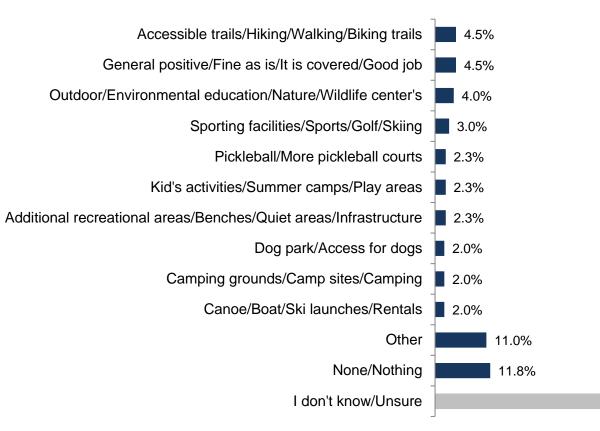
44.8%

Question 27: Which of the following park facilities and recreational programming opportunities would you say the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission currently provides too few of? Select all that apply. [OPTIONS SELECTED IN Q26 ELIMINATED]





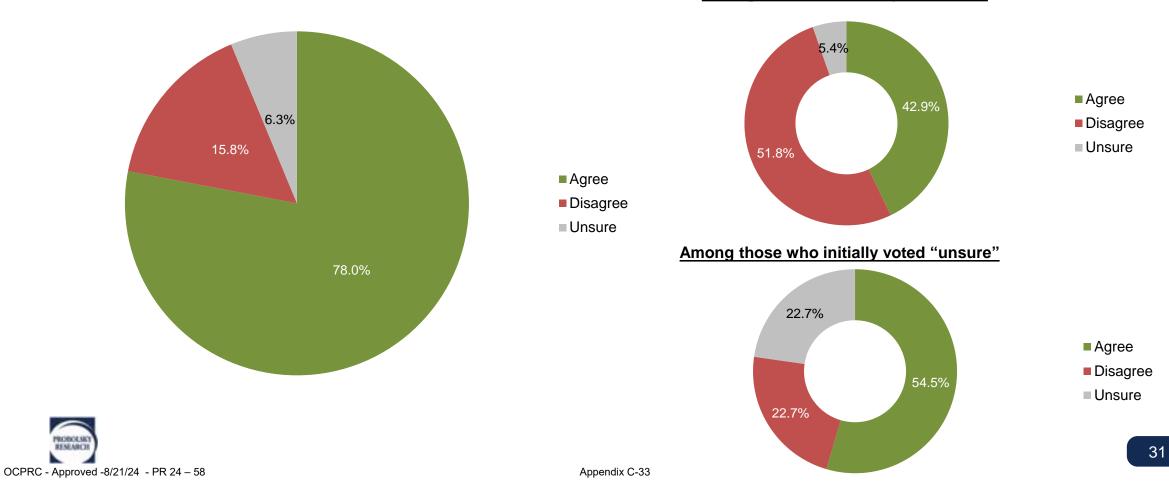
Question 28: What other park facilities or recreational programming opportunities do you believe Ottawa County should offer? [OPEN ENDED RESPONSE]





39.3%

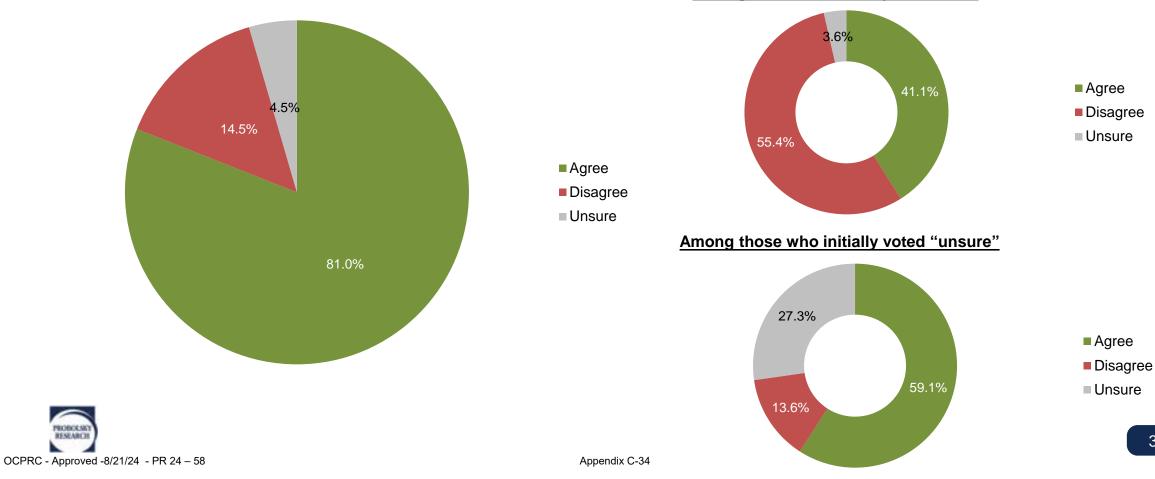
Question 29: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire land or easements for trails and bike paths



PROBOLING RESEARCH

#### Among those who initially voted "no"

Question 30: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire land or easements to protect unique environmental areas such as wetlands, sand dunes, mature woodlands, and wildlife areas

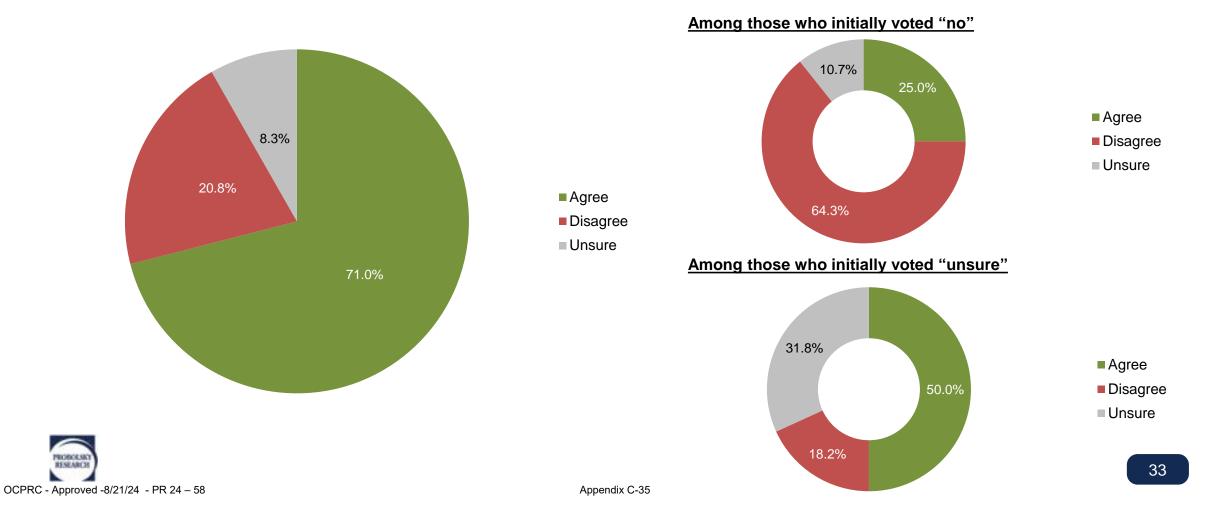


PROBOLIST RESEARCH

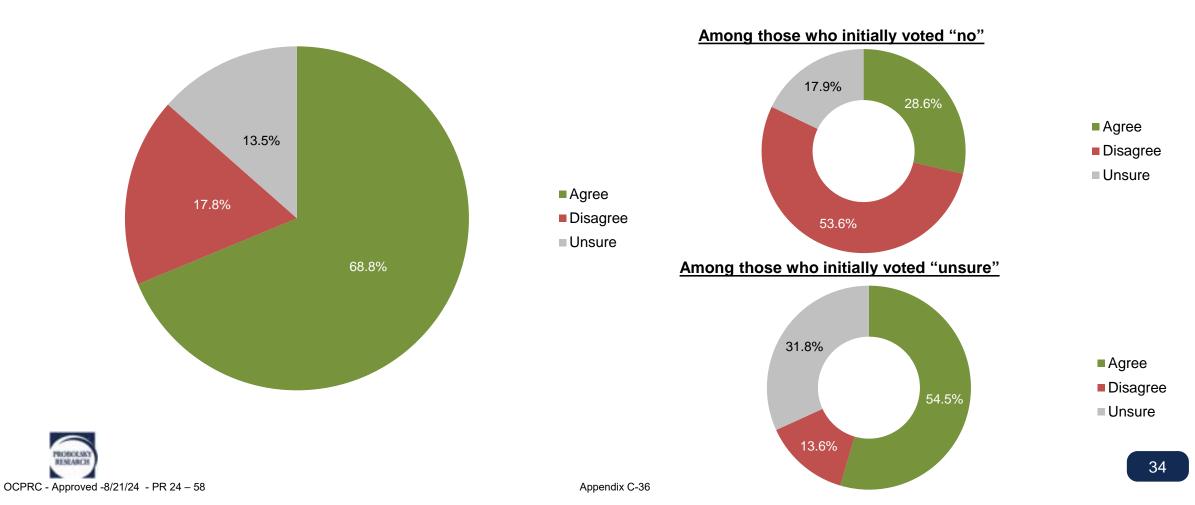
#### Among those who initially voted "no"

32

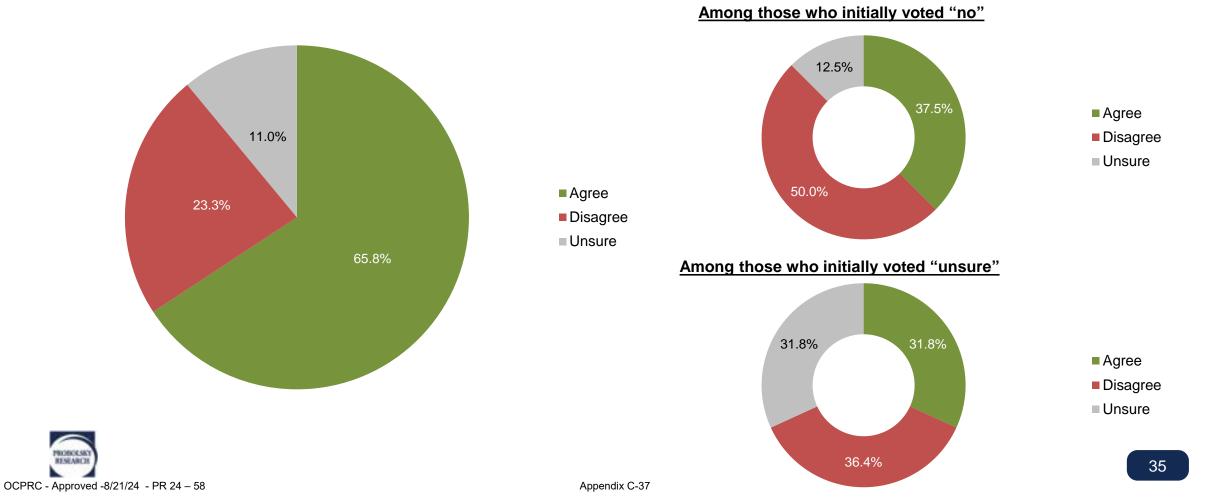
Question 31: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire property for habitat restoration or green infrastructure



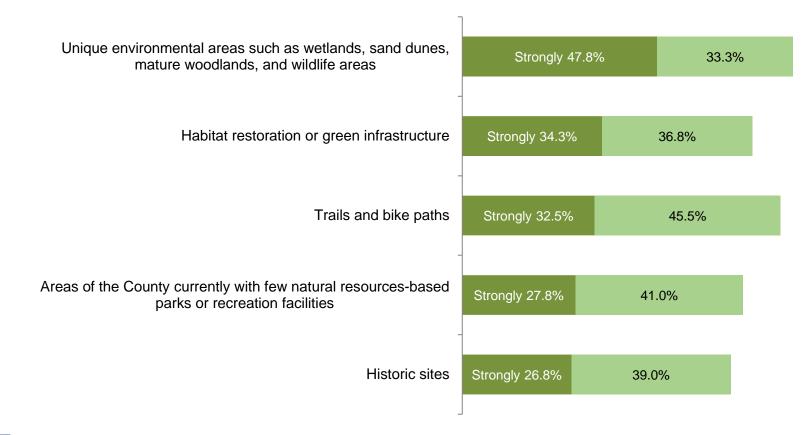
Question 32: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire property in areas of the County currently with few natural resources-based parks or recreation facilities



Question 33: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire historic sites

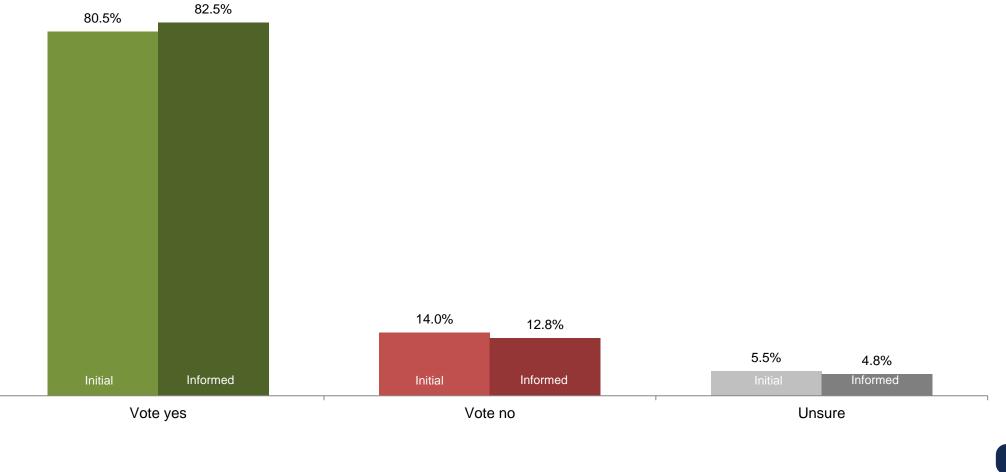


# Unique environmental areas such as wetlands is the type of acquired land with the highest intensity





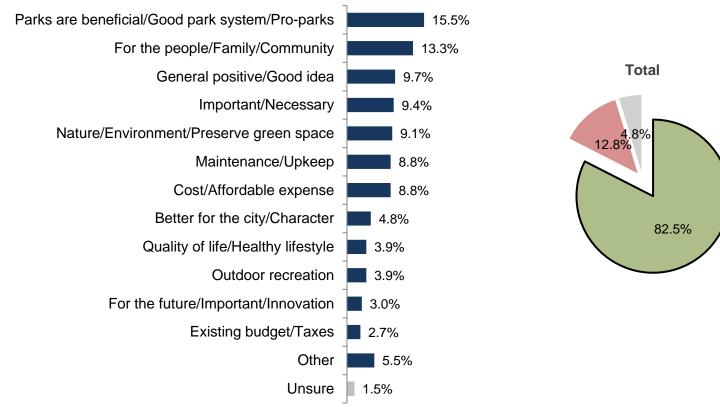
Question 34: Knowing what you know now, if Ottawa County placed a renewal of the 1/3 of a mill on a future election ballot, which amounts to \$25 per year for a house valued at \$150,000 with a taxable value of \$75,000, and the election were being held today, would you vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage, or would you vote no to oppose it?



PROBOLINY RESEARCH

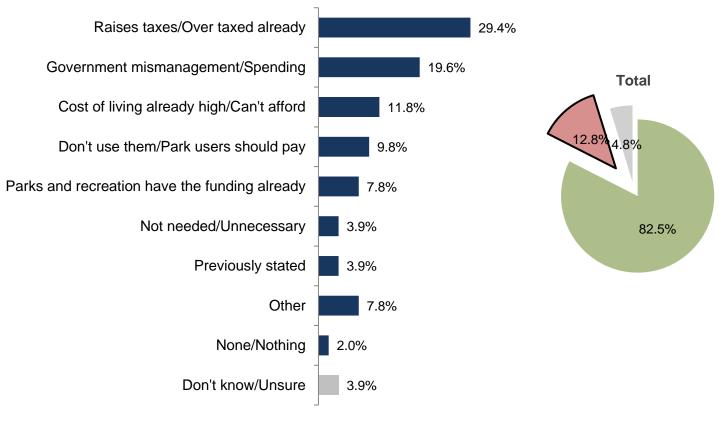
### Parks are beneficial/Good park system/Pro-parks were the top reasons for voting yes on the millage renewal

Question 35: Why would you vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage? [OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE] [IF ANSWERED 'VOTE YES' TO Q34]



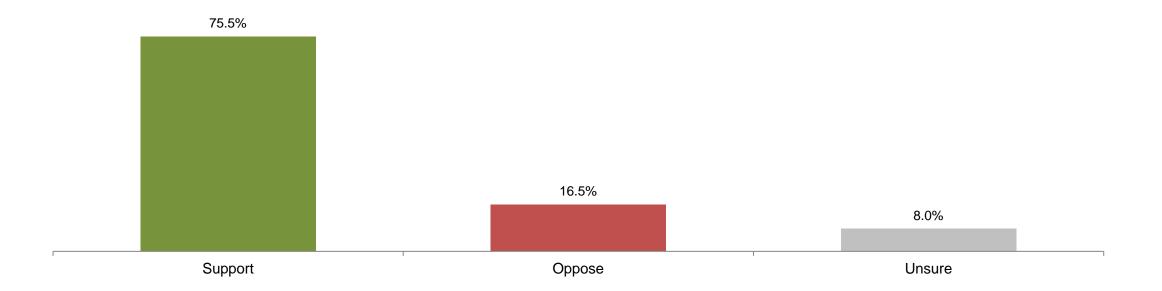


Question 36: Why would you vote no to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage? [OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE] [IF ANSWERED 'VOTE NO' TO Q34]





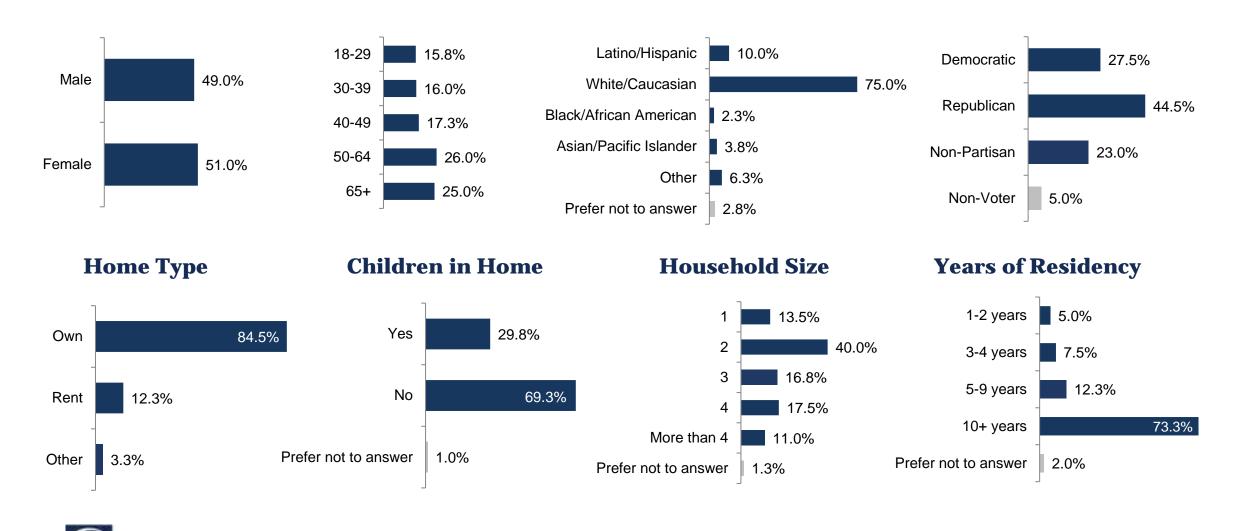
Question 37: Knowing what you know now, would you support or oppose an increased millage that would focus on the protection and management of the County's most sensitive natural resources, expanded outdoor education, and development of new natural resources-based recreation facilities and trails?



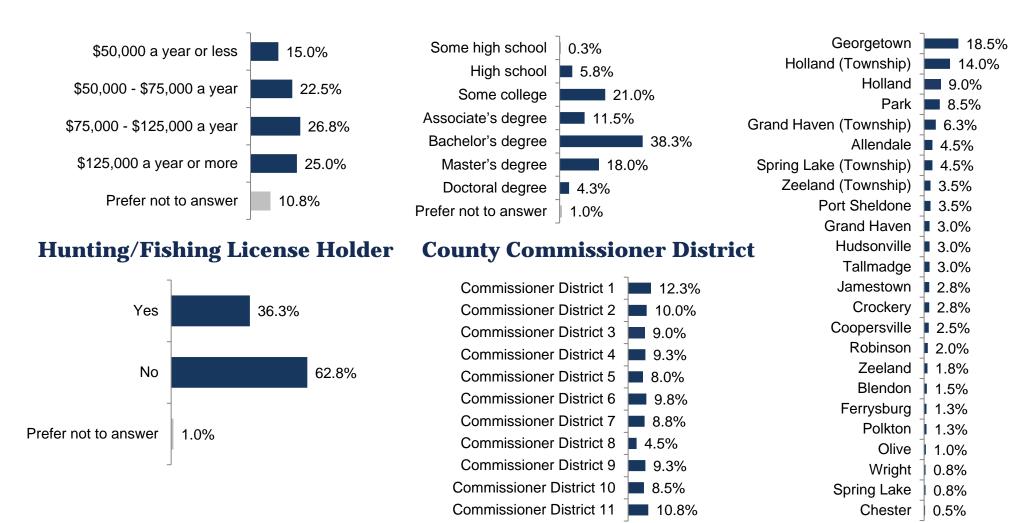




## Respondent demographics by gender, age group, ethnicity, party preference, home type, children in home, household size, and years of residency



#### Respondent demographics by household income, education level, municipality, Michigan Hunting/Fishing license holder, and County Commissioner District



## **Questions?**

#### Adam Probolsky, President

O: 949-855-6400 | M: 949-697-6726 E: adamp@probolskyresearch.com

#### Michael McLaughlin, Research Director

O: 202-559-0270



Opinion Research on Elections and Public Policy

**Newport Beach** 

(949) 855-6400



Appendix C-46

San Francisco

(415) 870-8150

Washington DC

(202) 559-0270



## **Appendix D: Strategy Lab Outputs**

## Heat Map

OCPRC staff and key stakeholders created a Heat Map by identifying various projects in alignment with the five initiatives. As part of this process, projects were weighted on a three-point scale to determine their strong (3), medium (2), or low (1) impact on Connectivity, Community Engagement, Conservation, Organizational Quality, and Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection.

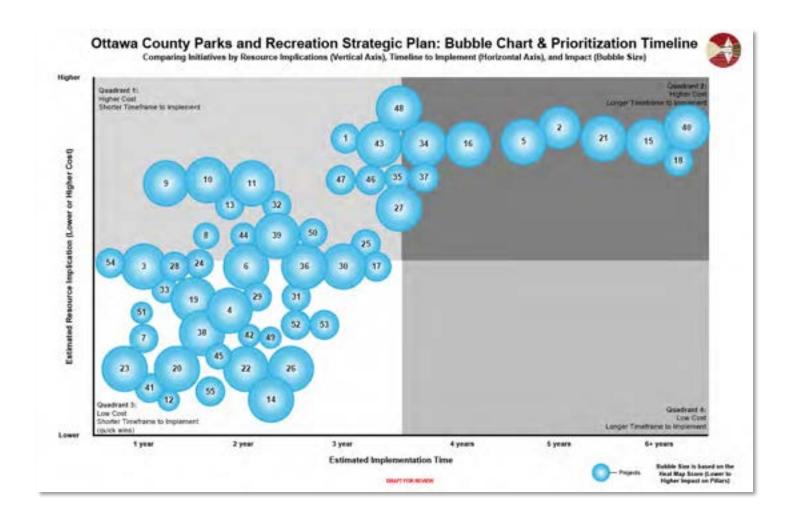
Throughout plan implementation and long after, when the Strategic Plan is in effect, OCPRC can leverage the Heat Map as a tool for decision making developed during the planning process.

OTTAINA COUNTY PARKS AND RECREAT	TION - STRATEGIC PLAN PROVIDENTION HEAT MAP		
Heat Map Rankings - Patential Impact	Stakeholders	Business Orivers	NULLEN
	Annu Control Franks. Annu Control Franks.	CONNECTORY COMMANY PAGALETAR COMMANY PAGALETAR	Server Server Servers
em.  Modemics Restrooms Light insisced trains and pathways Develop multilingual signage and publications Volunteer program improvement and expansion Normans the number full time maintemance and operations staff in each park region Develop sublicated accordurates that furnilises (scoreinger hunt, bird watch, etc.) Expanded pogram offerings - educational Expanded pogram offerings endeveloped Expanded expand commently performed pogram Expanded Expanded expand commentings Expanded expand expansions Expanded pogram offerings endeveloped Expanded expand expansions Expanded expanded expansions Expanded expansions Expansio			40 10 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12 12

This image does not display all the projects identified.

## Bubble Chart

Bubble Charts are an implementation tool used to visualize project impact, cost, and time to implement for easy decision making. They help identify the quick wins and long-term investments. These charts plot projects based on Heat Map impact scores. These tools will continue to verify project alignment – even as new projects are added – with the initiatives and the Commission's overall purpose, for the long-term success and growth of the Ottawa County Parks system.



## **Priority Recommendations**

#### The strategic planning process identified over 50 projects.

OCPRC can leverage the Heat Map and Bubble Chart to prioritize project implementation based on their impact score, cost, and timeline. The table below identifies the 10 highest priority projects recommended based on the strongest overall impact on each of the 5 initiatives.

ID	Project	Cost	Timeline
4	Volunteer program improvement and expansion	Lower	Shorter
6	Develop cultural and ecological trail signage on trails for user education	Medium	Shorter
14	Investigate and expand community partnerships	Lower	Shorter
15	Complete bike trails along the Grand River	Higher	Longer
19	Assess population and land use areas in Ottawa County	Medium	Shorter
	Reestablish land acquisition funds	Higher	Longer
23	Complete Park Management Plan for each park and establish maintenance schedule for plans	Lower	Shorter
26	Establish a quality assessment metric to drive restoration decisions	Lower	Shorter
50	Map and categorize all parks, developing an interactive map for potential park users	Medium	Shorter
40	Create a trail system that connects all Ottawa County parks and County trail systems	Higher	Longer
48	Complete the Macatawa River Greenway trail project	Higher	Longer

Note, an in-depth financial and implementation analysis was not conducted.

## **Example Projects**

OCPRC and stakeholder engagement efforts identified over 50 projects during the planning process. Projects were categorized under one of the initiatives based on its long-term impact according to the implementation heat mapping tool.

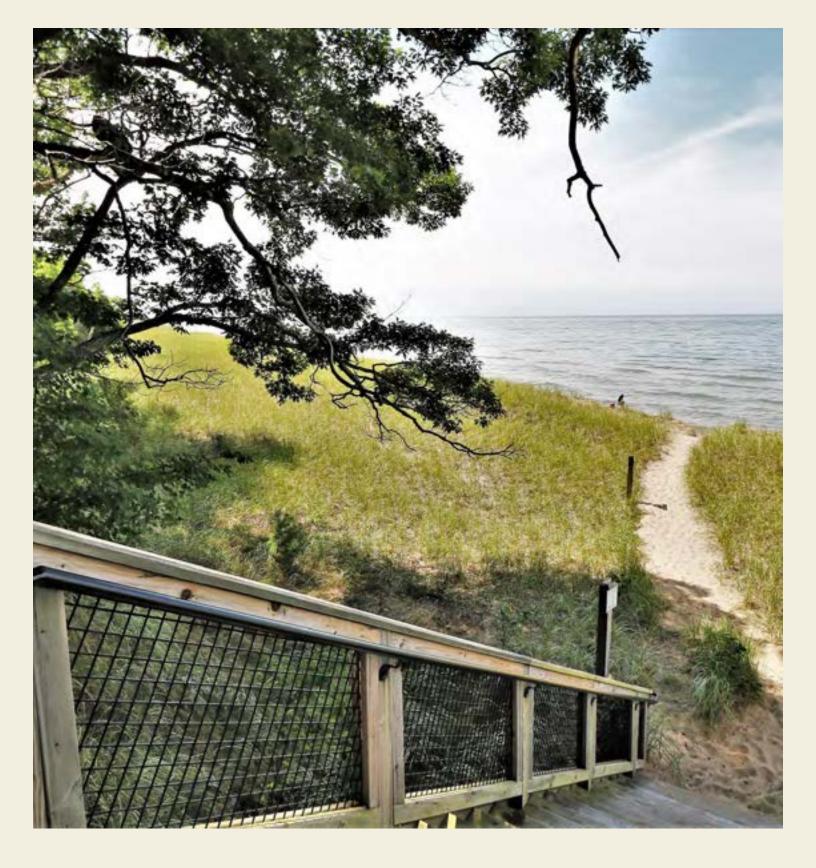
Recommended Project	Related Initiative
Increase and add lighting to selected trails and pathways	Connectivity
Develop native and culture signage on trails	Connectivity
Develop trail-based activity cards for families (scavenger hunt, bird watch, etc.)	Connectivity
Complete bike trails along the Grand River	Connectivity
Expand wheelchair accessible trails	Connectivity
Develop a program to bring parks to homebound populations	Connectivity
Map and categorize all parks, developing an interactive map for potential park users	Connectivity
Complete the Idema Explorers Trail	Connectivity
Develop a strategy for curating park user experiences	Connectivity
Develop experience nodes for all greenways, using Grand River Greenway as a map	Connectivity
Create a trail system that connects all Ottawa County parks and County trail systems	Connectivity
Complete the Macatawa River Greenway trail project	Connectivity
Volunteer program improvement and expansion	Community Engagement
Expanded programming schedule	Community Engagement
Expanded program offerings – educational, social, accessibility	Community Engagement
Investigate and expand community partnerships	Community Engagement
Develop a strategy and public relations/marking plan to increase brand recognition	Community Engagement
Create a user feedback strategy	Community Engagement
Provide opportunities for outdoor education to all Ottawa County students	Community Engagement
Create engagement outposts and ambassador programs	Community Engagement
Identify community groups and research their needs to determine service opportunities	Community Engagement

## Example Projects Continued

Recommended Project	Related Initiative
Create teacher networking opportunities	Community Engagement
Research feasibility and execution of 24-hour experiences	<b>Community Engagement</b>
Increase the number of interpretive and nature staff at the Nature Center	<b>Community Engagement</b>
Partner with the local tourism office to increase annual visitation to County parks	Community Engagement
Create partnerships with local businesses through sponsorship of events, tournaments, recreational venues, etc.	Community Engagement
Develop a suggested itinerary for visitors of Ottawa County	Community Engagement
Communicate with local partners to align conservation goals in their Master Plans	Conservation
Develop natural resources management staffing plan	Conservation
Increase the number of parks as "effectively invasive free"	Conservation
Establish a quality assessment metric to drive restoration decisions	Conservation
Develop an adaptive management strategy	Conservation
Identify and categorize all park department assets	Conservation
Complete the Grand River Greenway restoration projects	Conservation
Complete the Paw Paw Park restoration projects	Conservation
Initiate advocacy strategy for improved water-quality levels for all regional waterways and water bodies	Conservation
Create engagement outposts and ambassador programs	Conservation
Identify community groups and research their needs to determine service opportunities	Conservation
Communicate with local partners to align conservation goals in their Master Plans	Conservation
Develop natural resources management staffing plan	Conservation

## Example Projects Continued

Recommended Project	Related Initiative
Modernize Restrooms	Organizational Quality
Increase the number of full-time maintenance staff	Organizational Quality
Staff engagement and appreciation	Organizational Quality
Invest in team member tool and uniform improvement	Organizational Quality
Complete Park Management Plan for each park and establish maintenance schedule for plans	Organizational Quality
Establish a long-term budget for staff and professional resources to achieve management plan goals	Organizational Quality
Develop more educational facilities and spaces within parks	Organizational Quality
Develop and implement a training for programming staff	Organizational Quality
Increase the number full time maintenance and operations staff in each park region	Organizational Quality
Develop a strategy- including goals, metrics, and evaluation methodology- for identifying revenue generating opportunities within parks	Organizational Quality
Identify opportunities for increased investment in camping facilities	Organizational Quality
Update the inventory of highest quality natural areas	Strategic Land Acquisition and Protection
Assess population and land use areas in Ottawa County	Strategic Land Acquisition and Protection
Reestablish land acquisition funds	Strategic Land Acquisition and Protection
Develop a policy and strategy for conservation easements	Strategic Land Acquisition and Protection
Update the inventory of highest quality natural areas	Strategic Land Acquisition and Protection
Assess population and land use areas in Ottawa County	Strategic Land Acquisition and Protection
Reestablish land acquisition funds	Strategic Land Acquisition and Protection

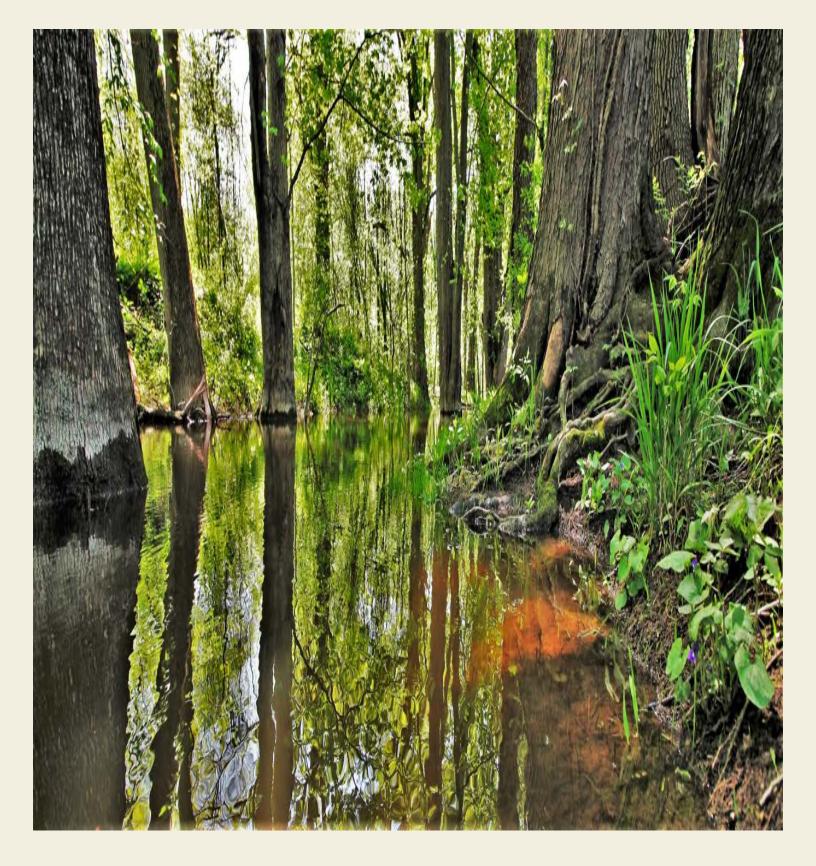


### Appendix E: Mission Statement History and Evolution

## Mission Statement History and Evolution

OCPRC's mission statement has evolved over the years in alignment with the parks' system organizational growth and land expansion.

Year	Document	Mission
1989	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan	The 1989 Plan included a five-part mission which is not easily comparable to subsequent mission statements.
1995	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan	To provide residents and visitors to Ottawa County with the highest quality leisure opportunities and promote high standards for environmental quality and land-use planning through a resource-based system of parks, open spaces lands, programs and other services
2000	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan	To provide residents and visitors to Ottawa County with the highest quality leisure opportunities and promote high standards for environmental quality and land-use planning through a resource-based system of parks, open spaces lands, programs and other services
2006	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan	To provide residents and visitors to Ottawa County with the highest quality leisure opportunities and promote high standards for environmental quality and land-use planning through a resource-based system of parks, open spaces lands, programs and other services
2010	Parks Commission Action	The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission enhances quality of life for residents and visitors, by preserving parks and open spaces and providing natural resource-based recreation and education opportunities.
2011	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan	The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission enhances quality of life for residents and visitors, by preserving parks and open spaces and providing natural resource-based recreation and education opportunities.
2016	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan	The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission enhances quality of life for residents and visitors, by preserving parks and open spaces and providing natural resource-based recreation and education opportunities.
2021	Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan	The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission enhances quality of life for residents and visitors, by preserving parks and open spaces and providing natural resource-based recreation and education opportunities.
2024	Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission Strategic Plan	To enhance well-being by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.



## Appendix F: Parks System Benchmarking and Comparison

#### **Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission**

Appendix F: Comparison with Other Parks Systems

Location		Acres (Most current available number)	Acres per 1,000 Residents (Minimum OCPRC Target = 20; National Average = 10.8)	Miles of Regional Trail Managed (where info was avaialble)	Budget (According to Parks Plan or Annual Report)	Operational (According to Parks Plan or Annual Report)	FTEs (According to Parks Plan or Annual Report)	% of County Land that is Recrational	Total Recreational Acres	Non- Profit Support Agency	Most Recent Parks Plan (as found online)	Parks Millage Rates	Most Recent Millage Vote	Approval %	Millage Term	Notes
Eaton	108,820	826	7.6	2.6	\$621,451		5				2021	0.50	2022	53%		First millage
Genesee	401,522	11,754	29.3		\$17,498,244	\$8,084,828	32				2019	0.75	2022	67%	10-year	
Grand Rapids	196,608	1988	10.1	9.47	\$11,700,000		42				2022	1.25	2019	70%	Permanent	Increased by 0.25 mills
Ingham	284,637	1,200	4.2		\$3,443,851	\$2,629,766	14				2022	0.50	2020	74%	6-year	A key component of the Ingham parks millage is development of regional multi-use trails.
Huron-Clinton Metroparks	Multi- County	25,000	N/A	55	\$68,335,229	\$62,570,941	200			Yes	2023	0.21				Multi-county authority
Kalamazoo	262,215	1,362	5.2	22	\$1,647,700	\$1,129,300	8	8.0%	29,491		2016	None				Info from 2016 parks plan; more staff as part of expo center and county fair
Kent	661,354	7,798	11.8	43	\$7,565,204	\$7,565,204	26			Yes	2019	None				
Muskegon	176,563	854	4.8		\$854,000		2				2020	None				
Oakland	1,270,426	6,851	5.4		\$45,030,838	\$36,466,257				Yes	2023	0.35	2020	76%	10-year	
Ottawa	303,372	7,402	24.4	28	\$5,763,215	\$5,763,215	25				2021	0.33	2016	72%	10-year	
Saginaw	187,782	900	4.8	14	\$1,406,478	\$1,263,978	6			Yes	2019	0.30	2014	59%	10-year?	
St. Clair	159,874	1,121	7.0	12	\$5,454,600	\$2,894,600	15	4.9%	22,731		2022	0.4956	2022	73%	6-year	
Washtenaw	365,536	6,700	18.3	36	\$22,728,437	\$10,909,650	52	2.0%			2020	0.5	2018	74%	10-year	Two 0.25 millages - capital and operations. Works with Huron Waterloo Pathways Initiative for fundraising for Border to Border Trail. Created special stewardship fund as part of this program: https://www.washtenaw.org/939/Nat ural-Areas-Preservation-Program. Washtenaw County Parks also manages agricultural preservation easements.

Other Notable Millages	Parks Millage Rates	Most Recent Millage Vote	Approval %	Millage Term	Notes
Ingham County Farmland and Open Space Preservation	0.14	2018	72.01%	10-year	Funding to preserve and protect farmland and other open space lands, including waterways, wildlife habitat, wetlands and other natural lands.
Washtenaw County Roads and Trails	0.5	2020	77%	4-year	20% of Road Commission millage for pathways, managed by Washetenaw County Parks

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission Observations and Recommendations for Appendix F

Background: To help inform the Strategic Plan process and implementation, OCPRC staff gathered information on similar large city, county, and regional park systems to help compare the OCPRC with systems in the rest of Michigan in terms of acreage, budget, trails, and funding support. The following is provided as observations and recommendations for consideration in light of the information gathered.

- o Observations:
  - Benchmarking.
    - The OCPRC has adopted the following guidelines for its parks and open spaces goals (from the 2021 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan):

"After.considering.survey.results.and.other.factors.involved.in.evaluating. park.and.open.space.needs.in.Ottawa.County?the.OCPRC.has.adopted.a. guideline.of.a.minimum.of.86.acres.per.7%66.population.for.county.park.and. open.space.lands;.In.developing.the.guideline?the.OCPRC.has.taken.into. consideration.the.strong.public.interest.in.preservation.of.natural.lands.and. open.space.the.overall.need.for.parklands.and.facilities.to.meet.identified. activity.needs.and.the.importance.of.tourism.in.Ottawa.County.and.the. added.demand.this.places.upon.parklands"

The OCPRC now exceeds this minimum guideline, as Appendix H shows, with 24.4 acres per 1,000 residents.

• The Strategic Plan surveys (Appendix A and C), Community Benefits Survey (Appendix B), and mobility data (Appendix G) further confirm the rationale stated above that this guideline should be considered a minimum guideline. In summary:

- Support for additional land preservation appears to be considerable.
- The Community Benefits Survey confirmed the significant economic benefits of the park system, including for tourism.
- The pandemic surge greatly increased demand on parks usage.
- Considering that nearly 48% of visits come from outside of Ottawa County, using Ottawa County population as the sole basis for the guideline is limited.
- Comparisons to the size of other parks systems in Appendix H further show the limits of the acreage guidelines as a benchmark:
  - Sizes of large park systems vary greatly in acreage managed, amenities, and staffing.
    - In this analysis, Genesee County has the highest amount of land managed per 1,000 residents at 29.3.
      - Several large and popular parks systems maintain high acreage levels despite declining census estimates.
  - The size of the parks system by acreage is only part of the story the amenities, services, and programs offered should be considered as a benchmark as well.

- While Oakland County Parks manages far fewer acres per 1,000 residents than the OCPRC (5.4 per 1,000 residents versus 24.4 per 1,000 residents), it has a much larger operational budget than any other county parks agency. This indicates that instead of providing land, Oakland County Parks provides more amenities, services, and programming. Still, it is important to note that on a per resident basis, Oakland County spends more in parks operations per resident than the OCPRC \$28.70 per resident versus \$18.99.
- Developing, managing, and/or funding regional trails are a critical aspect of many large city, county, and regional parks agencies.
- Millages:
  - Recent votes indicate that parks millages are popular, especially on renewal votes, with 7 out 9 agencies in this analysis exceeding 65% percent approval in their most recent millage votes.
    - Washtenaw County is seeking an early renewal that will go to vote in August 2024. A renewal on a related road and trails millage is included in the same election. The Appendix H spreadsheet should be updated at that time for future reference.
  - Millage rates vary widely by agency.
  - Millage terms vary widely as well.
  - Some counties have paired parks millages with special millages that complement the parks millages with regional multi-use trail construction and/or land preservation.
- o Preliminary.Recommendations;
  - Benchmarking:
    - It could be valuable for the OCPRC to develop a holistic benchmarking approach in light of the Strategic Plan mission, vision, values, and initiatives.
    - The OCPRC should consider sharing this information with the agencies highlighted so that they could collaborate to ensure accuracy across the state.
    - The OCPRC Parks and Open Space guidelines should be reviewed to as part of the 2026 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan update in light of the Strategic Plan and the data gathered:

The unique ecosystems and amenities that Ottawa County offers are a draw for non-residents - mobility data shows that over 48% of users come from outside of Ottawa County, the OCPRC should consider how this usage impacts demand for parks and open space in Ottawa County. Usage by Kent County is especially important as it represents 1/5<sup>th</sup> of visits in FY 2023 and population continues to increase in Kent County. This indicates that the OCPRC acreage goal should be higher than previously contemplated.

• As part of the 2026 Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan update and a possible update of the 2002 Ottawa County Non-Motorized Pathway Plan, a regional multi-

use trails guideline should be considered (similar to the Parks and Open Space guideline).

- <u>Millage</u>:
  - The OCPRC should further review millage levies and strategies of other parks system to determine the best approach for the 2026 renewal.
    - The information in Appendix H supports the data in the Scientific Survey showing that a millage renewal and increase may be well supported.
      - Further tracking of parks millages for other systems is recommended.
    - After the August 2024 election in Washtenaw County, OCPRC staff should connect with Washtenaw parks staff to learn more about their system and millage lessons learned.



## Appendix G: Placer.ai Data Analysis and Summary Statistics

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission Strategic Plan Appendix G: Placer.ai Data Preliminary Analysis and Summary Statistics



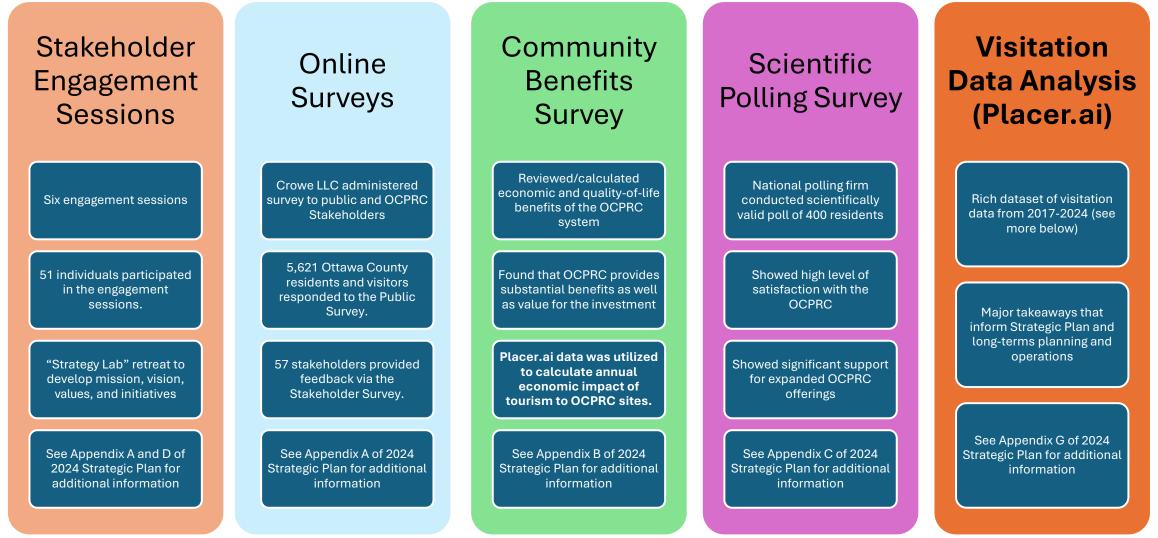
## 2024 Strategic Plan



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## 2024 Strategic Plan Inputs

- Placer.ai subscription was obtained as part of 2024 Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission (OCPRC) Strategic Plan process.
- One of several Strategic Plan inputs (see below).



Appendix G-4



## Mission, Vision, and Visitation Data

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Mission Statement: To enhance well-being by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

Vision Statement: To be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.

- The OCPRC's revised Mission & new Vision focus on creating and connecting natural spaces and connecting "all" people to these spaces.
- Therefore, visitation data is one potentially powerful metric for evaluating progress in achieving the OCPRC mission & vision by understanding how people are connecting to OCPRC parks, trails, and open spaces.
- The data can also be used as a tool to help achieve the mission & vision by informing strategic decision-making.

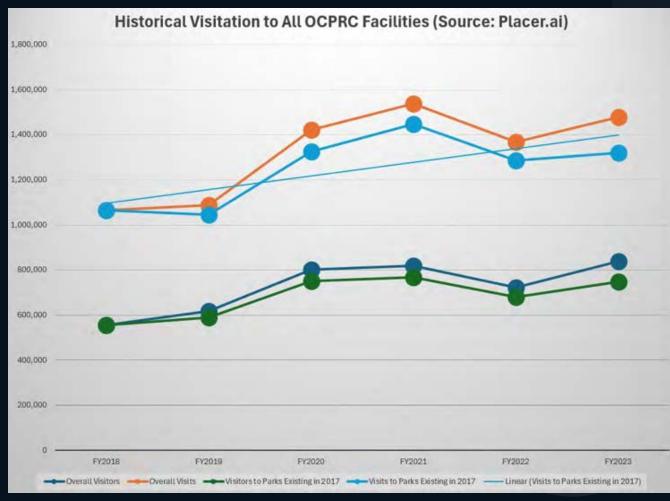
## Mission, Vision, and Visitation Data



**Mission Statement:** To enhance wellbeing by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

**Vision Statement:** To be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.

- The generally increasing visitation patterns indicate that the OCPRC has made already great progress in making spaces for "all to enjoy"
- However, this increased visitation could impact natural communities and may indicate that more "expansive" and "connected" spaces are needed to truly achieve this mission & vision.





**Mission Statement:** To enhance wellbeing by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

**Vision Statement:** To be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.

- Based on overall feedback, the mission and vision were intentionally crafted to incorporate the OCPRC's "greenway" approach, which has been to develop connected networks of parks, open spaces, and trails along four primary natural corridors in Ottawa County (Lake Michigan, the Grand River, the Macatawa River, and the Pigeon River).
- Significant investment has been made and is ongoing to establish the Grand River Greenway
- Many Grand River Greenway parks are relatively new (Grand Ravines), in the process of being developed or assembled (Ottawa Sands and the Bend Area), or are either newly connected (Grand River Park) or in the process of being connected.
- The visitation data helps shed light on how the investments and efforts for the Grand River Greenway are progressing toward being "expansive, accessible, and biodiverse communities for all to enjoy"



## Initiatives and Visitation

The visitation data also has implications each of the five initiatives identified in the Plan

#### The 5 Strategic Initiatives Map:



#### Conservation

To respect, protect, and enhance our diverse natural communities.

### Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection

To serve our growing community by acquiring high-quality natural resource and recreational land near protected property, greenways, and underserved areas.

#### Organizational Quality

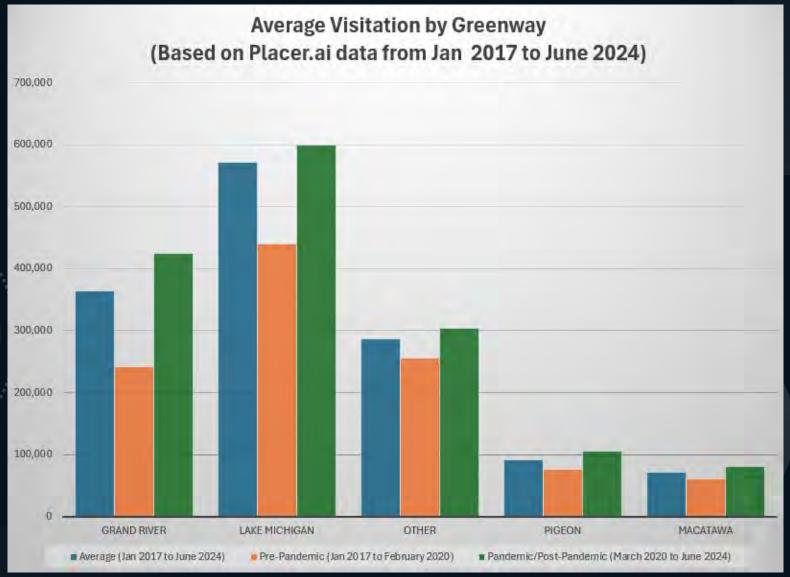
To sustainably invest in our organization to ensure continued high-quality user experiences for visitors and staff.



**Mission Statement:** To enhance wellbeing by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

**Vision Statement:** To be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.

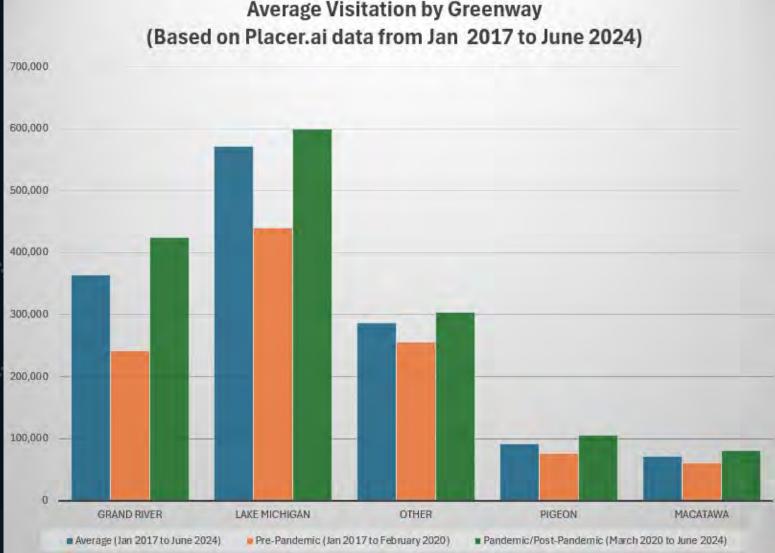
- The growth and improvements to the Grand River Greenway have already had significant impacts on overall visitation.
- The pandemic surge in visitation was especially significant for the Grand River Greenway, nearly doubling usage compared to pre-pandemic averages (see chart at right).
- Many visitors may have had their first experience of a Grand River Greenway park at that time and then returned in subsequent years.







This data also provides a baseline for measuring the progress of implementation of the Strategic Land Acquisition &
Protection and Connectivity initiatives by showing that efforts to assemble properties along the Grand River Greenway and connect them with the Idema Explorers Trail are leading to more people experiencing natural spaces.

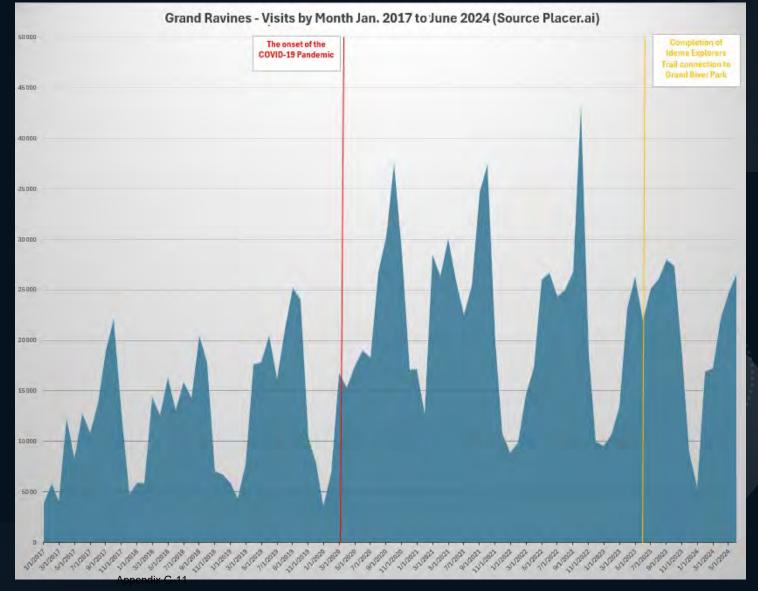




**Mission Statement:** To enhance wellbeing by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

**Vision Statement:** To be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.

- Over \$6.5 million has been invested to acquire and improve Grand Ravines (a key Grand River Greenway park) since 1999.
- Additional investments have been made to connect Grand Ravines to the Grand Valley State University Allendale campus and to Grand River Park via the Idema Explorers Trail.
- All these investments primed this location to experience dramatic increases in visitation following the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- It is now the most visited site in the OCPRC system.



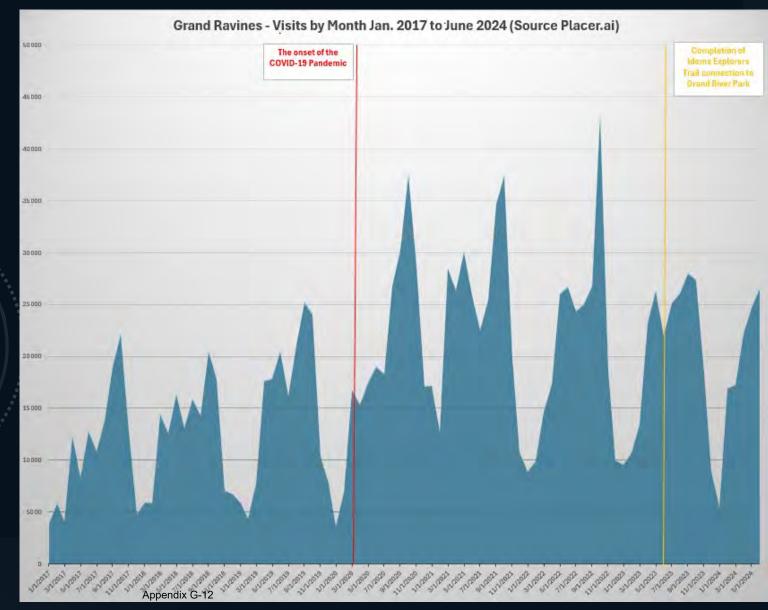




The 5 Strategic Initiatives Map:

Strategic Land Acquisition To serve our growing communit by acquiring high-quality natura resource and recreational land near protected property greenways, and underserved Organizational

our organization to ensure continued high-qualit user experiences fo visitors and staff



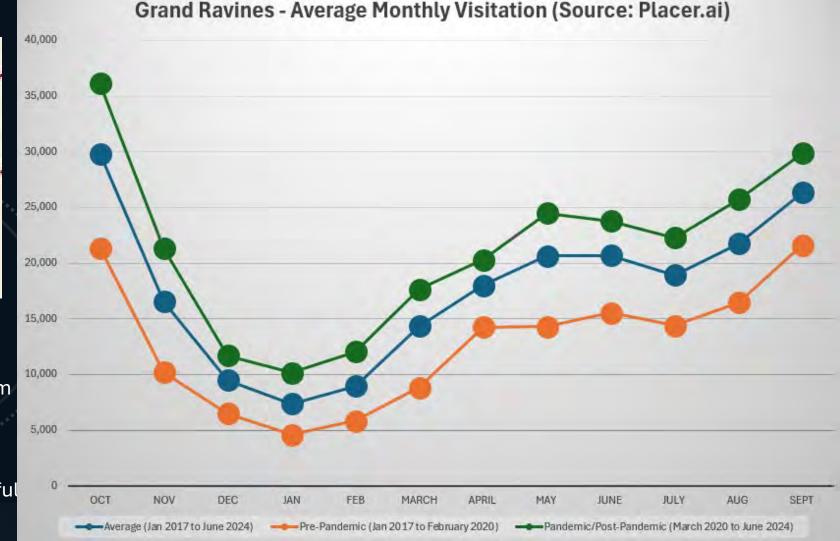
- Again, this data also provides a baseline for measuring the progress of the Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection and Connectivity initiatives.
- Assembling Grand Ravines occurred through 4 acquisitions during a 13-year period, creating a beloved and popular park.
- The connection from Grand Ravines to the GVSU campus in 2019 also likely helped increased visitation.



### Community Engagement

To educate and inform the public about what we're doing, why we're doing it, and how they can get involved.

- This data could also help implement activities related to the Community Engagement initiative, as it can help inform development of programming that targets typically busy times at a site
- For example, a park ambassador program has been discussed and could be impactful in the Fall at Grand Ravines

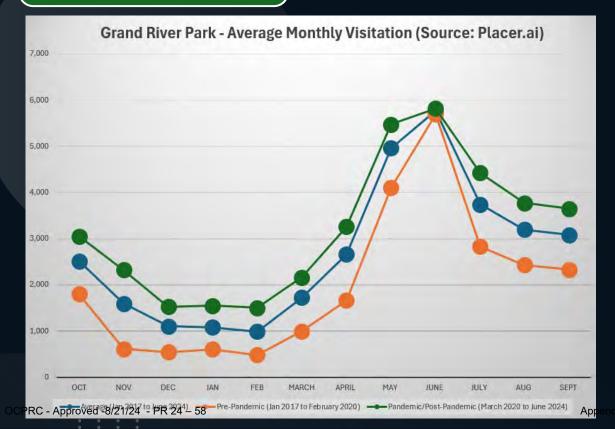


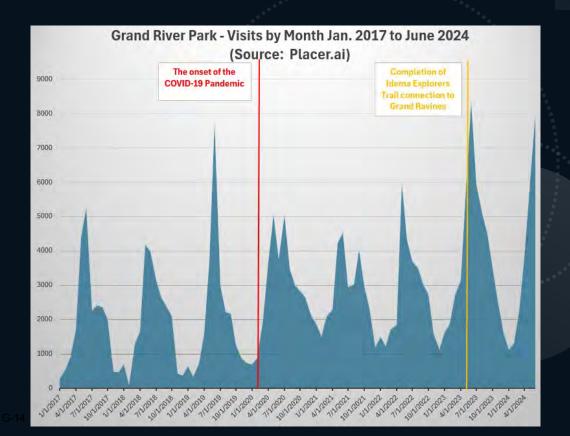


**Mission Statement:** To enhance wellbeing by stewarding a connected system of natural communities and promoting outdoor experiences.

Vision Statement: To be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.

- For Grand River Park, the pandemic appears to have impacted visitation in the "shoulder" seasons (outside of summer).
- Early visitation data following the completion of the Idema Explorers Trail connection to Grand Ravines in 2023 appears to be further increasing visitation.





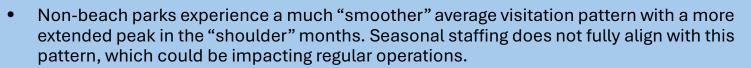


#### Organizational Quality

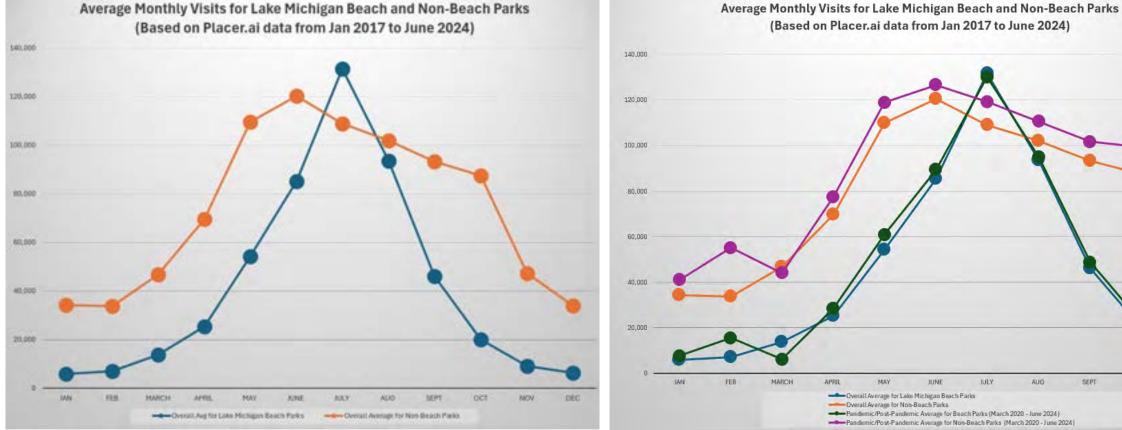
To sustainably invest in our organization to ensure continued high-quality user experiences for visitors and staff.

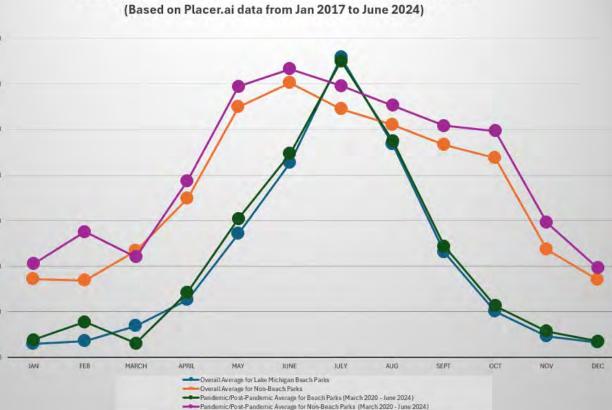
Visitation data also has implications for the Organizational Quality initiative

Seasonal staffing increases significantly from Memorial Day to Labor Day, which aligns well with the average visitation patterns of Lake Michigan Beach Parks (see chart bottom left – shown as calendar year instead of fiscal year for more intuitive interpretation).



The sustained visitation increases following the pandemic have resulted in further growth in the shoulder months for non-beach parks (see chart bottom right).





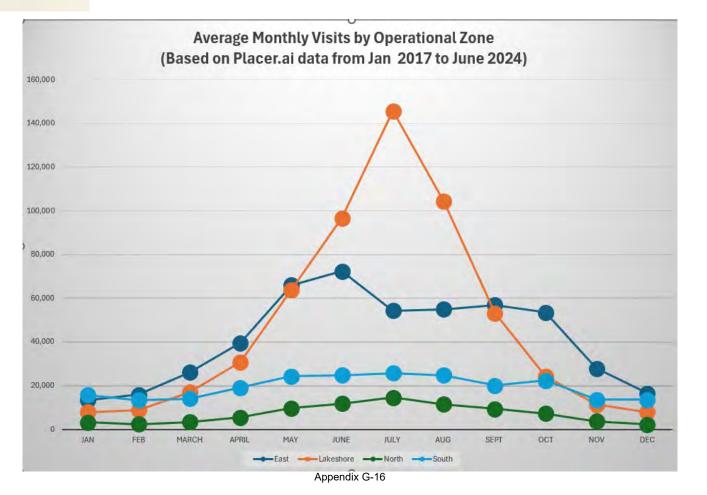
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#### Organizational Quality

To sustainably invest in our organization to ensure continued high-quality user experiences for visitors and staff.

- Park Operations and Maintenance is structured under four operational zones.
  - Zones are determined by several factors not discussed here.
- The four operational zones have dedicated full-time and seasonal staff that are to assigned to the parks in each zone.
- Visitation patterns vary significantly between zones.
- Further analysis is needed to understand how to factor in visitation data into the development Operational Zones.





### Visitation Data & Strategic Plan: Summarized Key Takeaways



The Placer.ai data also helped inform several key takeaways in the Strategic Plan about the current state and potential future direction of the OCPRC (see Pages 8 and Page 13 of 2024 Strategic Plan)

#### **Observations**

- Annual park visits data indicates there is growing community desire and need for vibrant parks and green spaces, plentiful recreational activities, and enriching programming opportunities for the average 1.48 million park visitors each year
- Overall survey data and usage patterns show a high-level of satisfaction with OCPRC, indicating the successful execution of the current mission
- Survey data and usage patterns indicate public support for OCPRC leadership in protecting land, further development of regional trails, natural resources management, and community engagement and education
- OCPRC facilities experienced and maintained a "pandemic-surge" in visitation, with a 25% increase for same-site visits from pre-2019 levels
- Fall and spring usage is impactful, and seasonal staffing does not match evolving usage patterns. At many parks, the fall season is especially important, and spring usage is increasing

#### **Organization Implications**

- Evaluation of staffing levels/structure should continue. Increased visitation and seasonal staffing challenges may negatively impact OCPRC's long-term ability to sustain the high standards expected in the park system
- Increased staffing levels are needed to help achieve the revised mission and new vision
- Additional funding support is required to achieve the revised mission and new vision

#### **Funding Implications**

• Stakeholder engagement, economic value, and usage patterns provide evidence of strong desire for the OCPRC to continue to protect more land, help develop additional trails and accessible amenities, and provide additional stewardship and engagement services.



### **Tracking Future Visitation & Strategic Plan Implementation**

- It is anticipated that some planned improvements could increase visitation rates at locations such as Ottawa Sands, Eastmanville Bayou, Bend Area, Rosy Mound, & the Upper Macatawa Natural Area.
- Following visitation patterns before & after these improvements will help evaluate how these planned improvements made progress in implementation of mission, vision, and several initiatives
- Incorporating visitation numbers from the Bass River State Recreation Area (MDNR) and Hawthorn Pond (Holland Township) should be considered with upcoming collaborative projects that could drive new visitation resulting from OCPRC-funded improvements as they are significant steps in creating more "expansive natural spaces" and implementation of the "connectivity" initiative.





### Supporting Background, Data, and Analyses



# Background & Applications

## Background Five-year effort to build visitation dataset

Before 2024 Strategic Plan process, there were ongoing efforts to gather visitation data for OCPRC sites.

Static Devices, real-time	Mobility Data Services (Third-party services that provide anonymized data)			
<ul> <li>Trafx Counters</li> <li>Data back to Summer 2021 for some sites</li> <li>9 vehicle Counters</li> <li>3 trail Counters</li> <li>Staff will work to compare Trafx &amp; Placer.ai data in the</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Streetlight Data</li> <li>Dataset dating from 2017 to 2022</li> <li>Lag in availability of data</li> <li>Vehicle visits only</li> <li>"Apples to Apples" comparison was not possible for all years due to changes in data processing</li> <li>Showed major increases in uses from 2019 to 2021</li> <li>Limits on sites that could be included</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Placer.ai</li> <li>Dataset dating from January 2017 to three days prior to current date</li> <li>Includes all visits, whether or not by vehicle</li> <li>Data can be analyzed easily in GIS to better understand origin of visits</li> <li>No limits on sites that can be analyzed</li> </ul>		
future		<ul> <li>Can include sub-areas of sites (for examples Grand Ravines Dog Park)</li> <li>Includes non-OCPRC sites as well</li> </ul>		

# Applications

Understand visitation patterns

Baseline patterns

Changes over time

Monthly and annual performance versus historical averages

Understand origin destinations of visits

Within Ottawa County

## Support enhanced understanding of benefits of OCPRC

Economic

Health & Wellness

Support datadriven decisionmaking

2024 Strategic Plan Input

**Capital Planning** 

Operations

Community Engagement

Outside Ottawa County

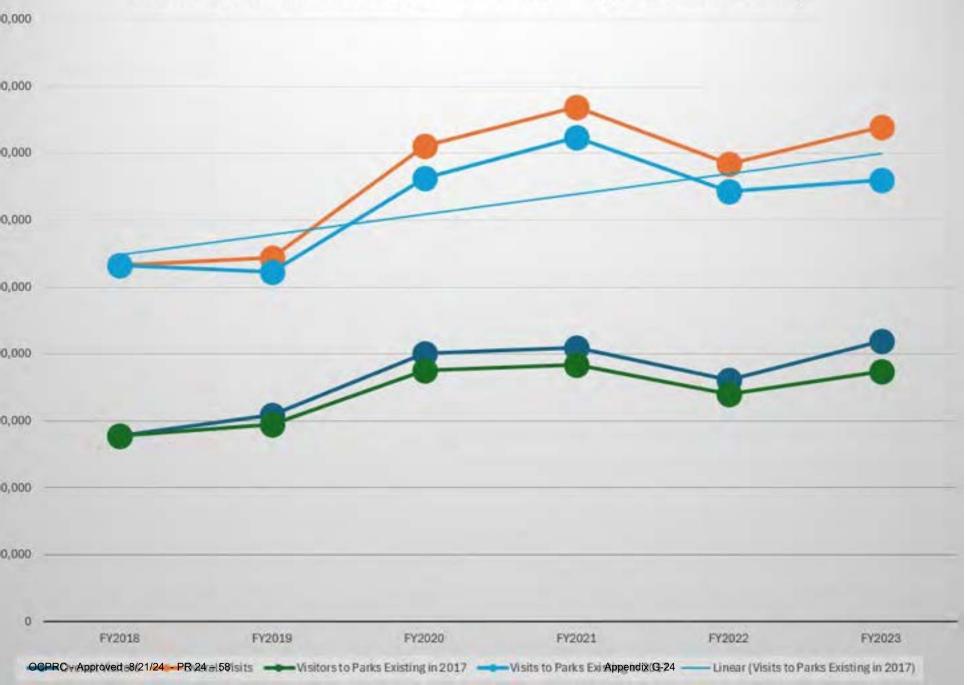
Benefits to local communities in Ottawa County as well as visitors to Ottawa County

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## **Overall Visitation**

## Historical Visitation to All OCPRC Facilities (Source: Placer.ai)



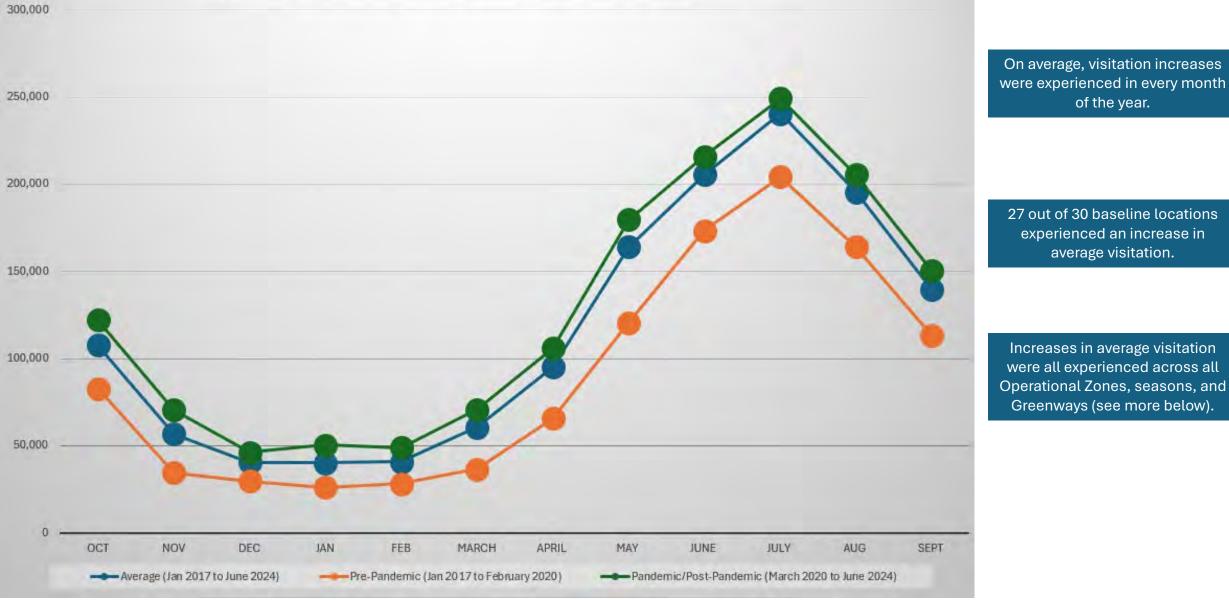
Following the onset of the pandemic, increases in visitation have been dramatic.

Although there has been a decrease from peak visitation in 2021, there has been significant sustained increases for baseline locations (locations which existed at the beginning of 2017).

New and/or improved locations contributed to near peak visitation in Fiscal Year 2023.

Visitation increases are being experienced through almost the entire system.

## Average Monthly Visitation (Based on Placer.ai data from Jan 2017 to June 2024)



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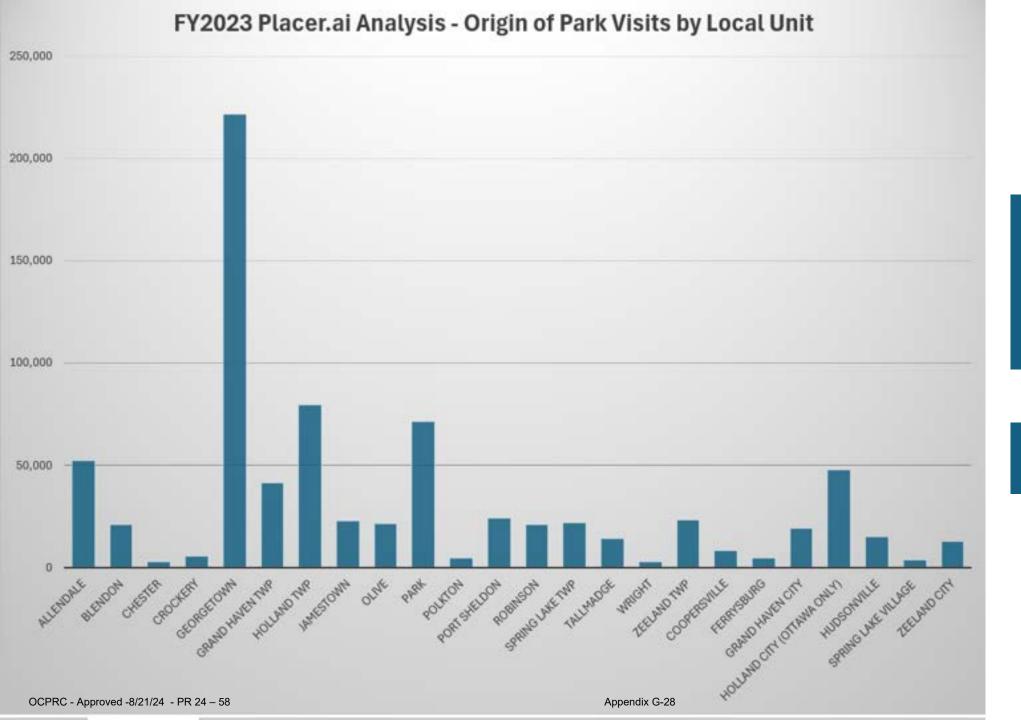


# **Origin Locations**

## FY2023 Placer.ai Analysis - Origin of Visits

			In FY23, nearly half of visits to OCPRC facilities originated from outside Ottawa County.
			Kent County residents frequently visit OCPRC properties, making up 20% of visits (over 300,000 visits).
			While there is some visitation from Allegan and Muskegon counties, residents from these counties may be opting for similar facilities that are available nearby.
Kent County (300.031)	Rest of Mic	:higan (171,786)	Tourism from beyond the immediate region is an important part of visitation, with 20% of visits generated from beyond Ottawa County and its three direct neighboring counties. Nearly 10% of the visits are from out of state.
Outside MichirAppendix G-27)	gan County 50,960)	Muskegon County (50,695)	

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OCPRC staff analyzed the visitations patterns for FY2023 by local units according to total visits generated to OCPRC parks, as a percentage of visits generated from Ottawa County, and in proportion to the population of that local unit.

Generally, the raw number of visits follows the size of the local populations.

#### FY2023 Placer.ai Analysis - Origin of Parks Visits by Local Unit

Origin Location	Totals	% of Ottawa County Visits	% of Ottawa County Population	Visits per Population (2022 Census Estimates) 4.04	
Georgetown Twp.	221,860	28.95%	18.25%		
Holland Twp.	79,645	10.39%	13.23%	2.00	
Park Twp.	71,350	9.31%	6.28%	3.78	
Allendale Twp.	52,491	6.85%	8.81%	1.98	
Holland (Ottawa pt)	47,677	6.22%	8.75%	1.81	
Grand Haven Twp.	41,451	5.41%	6.26%	2.20	
Port Sheldon Twp.	24,270	3.17%	1.81%	4.45	
Zeeland Twp.	23,498	3.07%	4.03%	1.94	
Jamestown Twp.	23,114	3.02%	3.31%	2.32	
Spring Lake Twp.	22,139	2.89%	4.32%	1.70	
Olive Twp.	21,473	2.80%	1.70%	4.20	
Blendon Twp.	21,049	2.75%	2.45%	2.85	
Robinson Twp.	21,006	2.74%	2.12%	3.29	
Grand Haven City	19,242	2.51%	3.65%	1.75	
Hudsonville	15,407	2.01%	2.56%	2.00	
Tallmadge Twp.	14,342	1.87%	3.00%	1.59	
Zeeland City	13,132	1.71%	1.88%	2.32	
Coopersville	8,223	1.07%	1.61%	1.70	
Crockery Twp.	5,626	0.73%	1.55%	1.20	
Polkton Twp.	4,976	0.65%	0.85%	1.93	
Ferrysburg	4,666	0.61%	0.98%	1.59	
Spring Lake Village	3,719	0.49%	0.84%	1.47	
Chester Twp.	3,110	0.41%	0.70%	1.48	
Wright Twp.	2,959	0.39%	1.05%	0.93	
Ottawa County*	766,425				

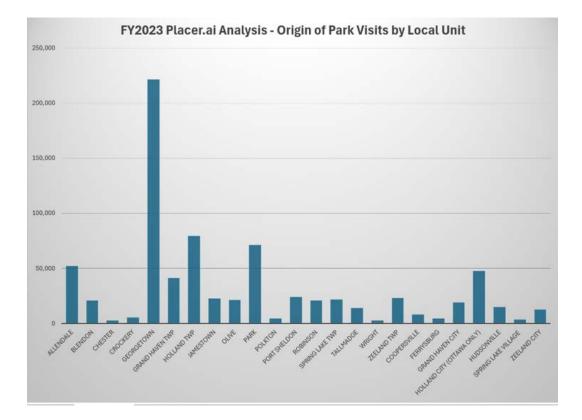
23 out of 24 local units generated an equivalent of at least 1 visit per resident\*

\*Note: this metric is solely generated to compare how many visits are occurring as a proportion of residents, not to literally mean that every person residing in a particular municipality visited.

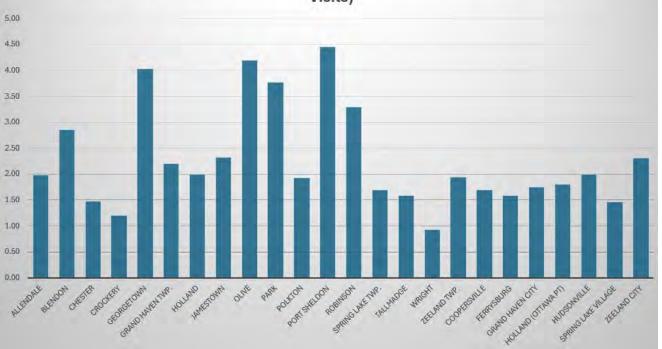
See charts on following slides for further analysis.

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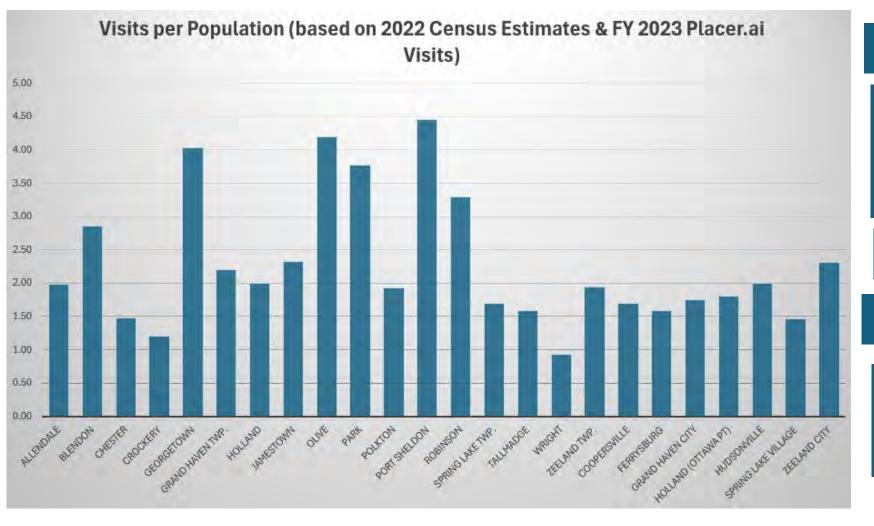
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Visits per Population (based on 2022 Census Estimates & FY 2023 Placer.ai Visits)



The charts above with the gross number of visits (top left) and the number of visits per population (top right) helps to further demonstrate that there is generally equitable visitation for most local units.



## It should be noted that some communities have notably high proportional visitation (3+ visits per resident).

Georgetown Township significantly overperforms its population (a rate of 4.0 visits per resident), accounting for 29% of visits from Ottawa County while accounting for just over 18% of the County's total population. This is likely due to the number of nearby improved facilities.

Park Township also significantly overperforms (a rate of 3.8 visits per resident).

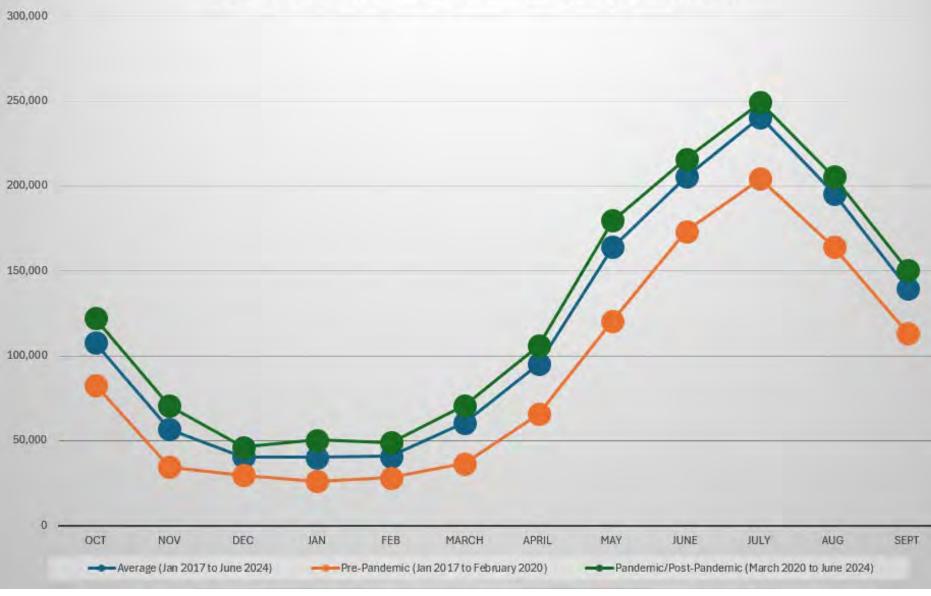
14 of 24 local units generated visits at a rate of virtually double their population (over 1.9 over more per resident).

This includes local units that do not have a County Park within their boundaries or have a relatively limited amount of County Parks such as Blendon Township, Jamestown Township, Holland Township, and City of Hudsonville.



# Annual/Seasonal Visitation Patterns

## Average Monthly Visitation (Based on Placer.ai data from Jan 2017 to June 2024)



The monthly average visitation pattern follows an expected pattern of peak use in July.

Post-pandemic, average monthly visitation for every month increased substantially. However, the increases are not evenly distributed, with the highest percentage increases occurring outside the peak summer months.

Average visitation in January, March and November has nearly doubled pre-pandemic vs. post-pandemic.

May had the highest numerical increase in its average visitation.

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## Average Seasonal Visitation (Based on Placer.ai data from Jan 2017 to June 2024)



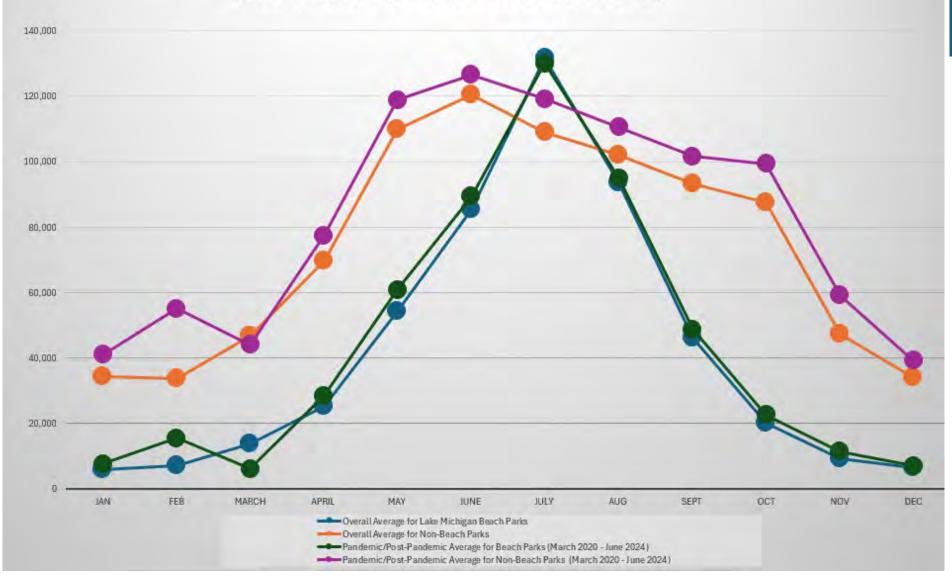
On average, Summer is by far the busiest season, with the Lakeshore Parks being the major factor in the large increase in average seasonal visitation.

Spring and Fall are about half the visitation of Summer.

However, the Fall season includes peak visitation from some parks such as Grand Ravines, Hemlock Crossing, Eastmanville Farm, and Crockery Creek Natural Area (more individual park visitation patterns available below).

The post-pandemic average increases over seasons were more significant for non-Summer seasons, with Spring experiencing a higher numerical increase than Summer.

### Average Monthly Visits for Lake Michigan Beach and Non-Beach Parks (Based on Placer.ai data from Jan 2017 to June 2024)



For non-beach parks, the typical Summer visitation increases over Spring and Fall are less dramatic

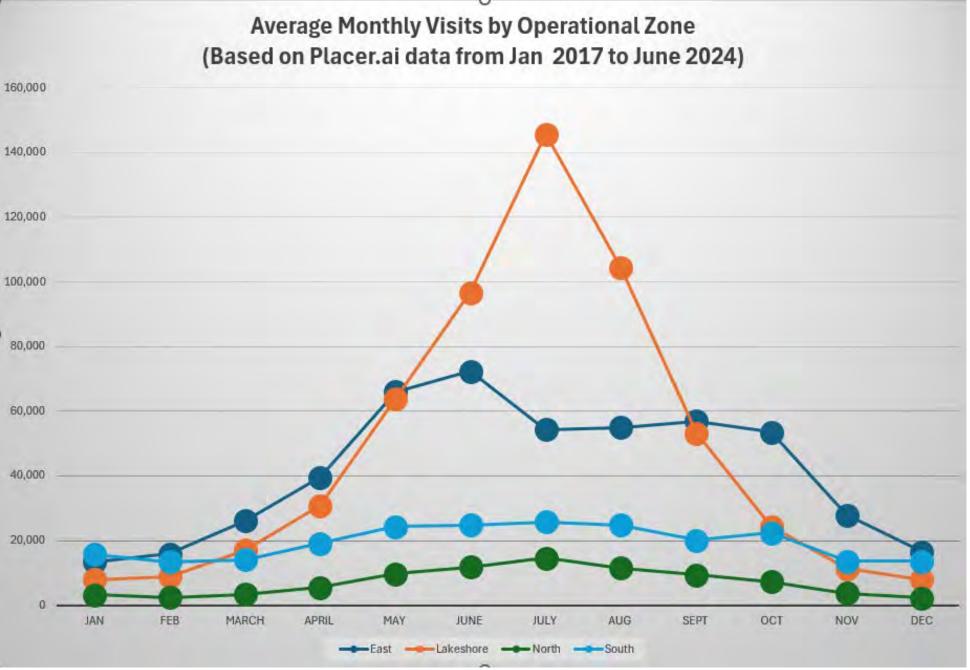
The post-pandemic averages for non-beach parks are in a much narrower band of average visitation (Spring through Fall), with a variance of 30% between the average highest month (June) and the average lowest (Oct). For beach parks, the variance is 474% between the average highest month (July) and the average lower month (Oct).

This narrower variance is due in part to changes in visitation patterns post-pandemic. Previously the band of visitation from May to October was 59% between the average highest month (June) and average lowest month (October).

This indicates that non-beach parks surge in visitation from May to October, which does not match seasonal staffing patterns.



## **Operational Zones**



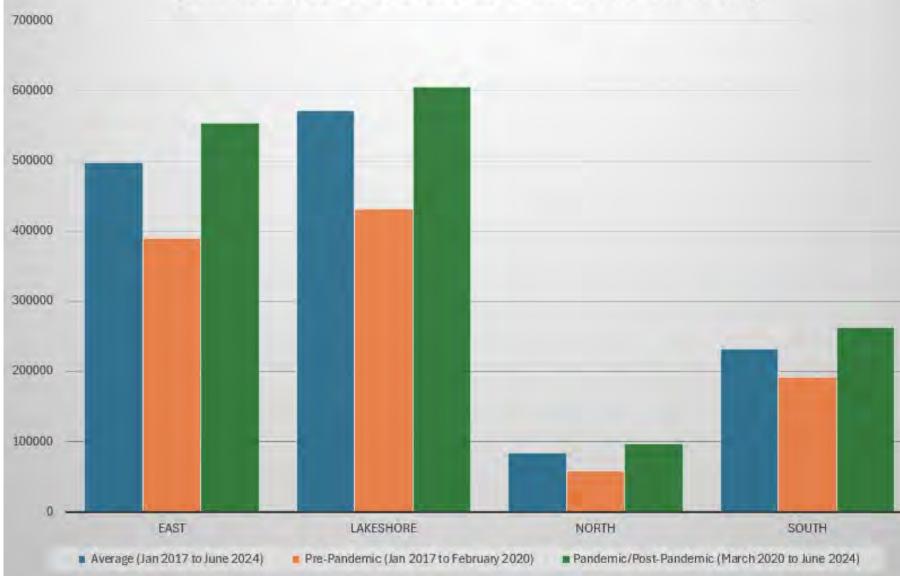
On average, the Lakeshore Operational Zone experiences the highest average visitation, followed by the East Operational Zone.

Over the course of a year, annual visitation patterns vary significantly between zones.

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## Average Visitation by Operational Zone (Based on Placer.ai data from Jan 2017 to June 2024)



All Operational Zones have experienced significant increases in average visitations patterns.

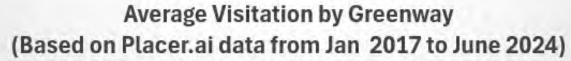
> The East Operational Zone experienced the highest numerical increase while the North zone experienced the highest percentage increase.

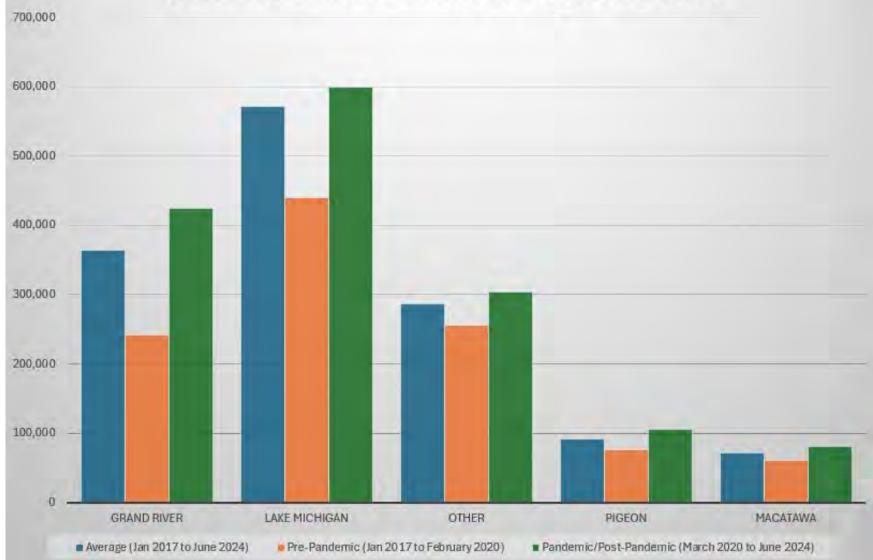
These changes in visitation patterns varied across seasons for each Operational Zone (see chart).

Before making any changes in Operations staffing, these visitation/trends patterns should be reviewed as well as overall division of Operational Zones.



## Greenways





The Grand River Greenway experienced the most substantial change in visitation pattern following the pandemic, surpassing "other" category of parks.

This is likely due in part to new amenities, such as the Idema Explorers Trail.

Further increases are expected, especially following the development of the Idema Explorers Trail in the Bass River State Recreation Area.

The Bass River State Recreation Area already receives significant visitation (nearly 100,000 visits annually over the last three year), the development of the Idema Explorers Trail will likely increase visitation significantly. Any future increases over the baseline should be included as part of the overall OCPRC statistics.

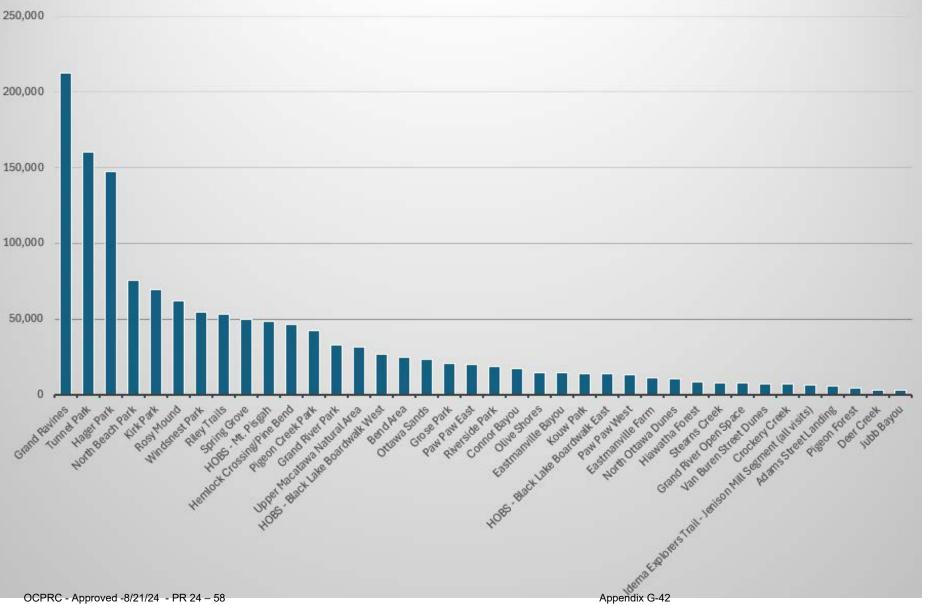
Consider review of other parks to see if there is any value is pairing them with any Greenway as visitation at these parks is significant.

With the improvements at Ottawa Sands, it may be worthwhile to consider how to quantify its visitation in relation to North Ottawa Dunes and North Beach Park.



## Parks – Overview

## Average Annual Visits by Site (Based on Placer.ai data from Jan. 2017 to June 2024)



Some parks are over-performing their amenities, indicating a latent desire for more visitation with improved amenities.

Enhanced amenities at Riley Trails should be prioritized – every other park with this level of visitation has improved amenities.

Some parks and greenways may be underperforming given their size, amenities, and location near population centers

- Upper Macatawa Natural Area
- North Ottawa Dunes
- Paw Paw Park
- The Macatawa Greenway

#### Placer.ai - Average Annual Visitation by Ottawa County Parks & Recreation Commission Location

Location	Annual Average Visitation (Jan 2017 to June 2024)	Pre-Pandemic (Jan 2017 to February 2020)	Post-Pandemic (March 2020 to June 2024)	Numerical Change in Average from Pre- Pandemic to Post- Pandemic	% Change in Average from Pre- Pandemic to Post- Pandemic
Grand Ravines	212,814	153,825	255,410	101,585	66%
Tunnel Park	160,471	138,389	175,205	36,816	27%
Hager Park	147,188	138,683	153,800	15,117	11%
North Beach Park	75,771	78,500	73,316	-5,184	-7%
Kirk Park	69,607	64,745	72,746	8,000	12%
Rosy Mound	62,225	57,201	65,728	8,527	15%
Windsnest Park	54,133		54,133		
tiley Traits	53,009	44,167	59,175	15,008	34%
Spring Grove	49,949	51,332	49,227	-2,105	-4%
IOBS - Mt. Pisgah	48,357	44,739	50,662	5,923	13%
emlock Crossing/Pine Bend	46,296	39,867	50,720	10,853	27%
Pigeon Creek Park	41,983	32,608	50,055	17,447	54%
Grand River Park	32,435	24,118	38,520	14,402	60%
Jpper Macatawa Natural Area	31,672	26,016	35,553	9,537	37%
IOBS - Black Lake Boardwalk West	26,461	18,646	32,707	14,061	75%
Send Area	24,593		24,593		
Ottawa Sands	23,165		23,015	No. of Street,	
Brose Park	20,623	16,623	23,361	6,738	41%
Paw Paw East	20,117	15,248	23,624	8,377	55%
liverside Park	18,203	12,465	22,138	9,673	78%
Connor Bayou	17,117	15,945	17,735	1,790	11%
Drive Shores	14,529	10,379	17,382	7,003	67%
astmanville Bayou	14,244	10,552	17,401	6,850	65%
Couw Park	13,966		13,966		
IOBS - Black Lake Boardwalk East	13,632	11,837	14,802	2,965	25%
aw Paw West	13,217	15,128	15,338	210	1%
astmanville Farm	11,044	9,800	11,835	2,035	21%
lorth Ottawa Dunes	10,008	7,024	12,111	5,088	72%
liawatha Forest	8,585	5,174	11,011	5,837	113%
Stearns Creek	7,903		7,903		12
Brand River Open Space	7,502	5,482	8,942	3,460	63%
/an Buren Street Dunes	7,212	4,428	7,212	2,784	63%
Crockery Creek	6,966	4,863	8,419	3,556	73%
dema Explorers Trail - Jenison Mill Segment (all visits)	6,152		6,152		
dams Street Landing	5,896	4,937	6,580	1,643	33%
Pigeon Forest	3,895	3,692	4,103	411	11%
Deer Creek	3,110	1,690	3,881	2,190	130%
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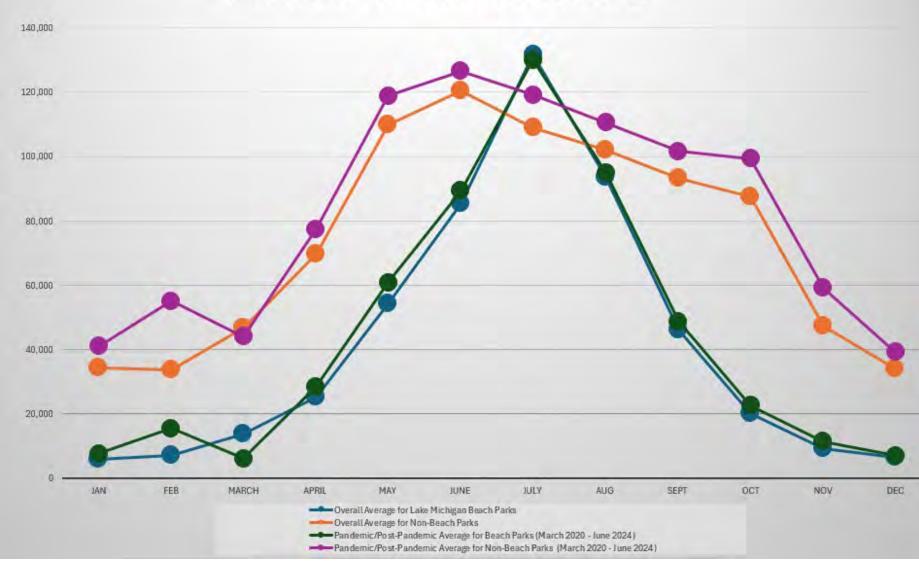
Some parks may need expansion or new marketing to help alleviate high visitation, especially at peak times.

Now that the two parks are connected, consider renaming Grand River Park to market it as Grand Ravines East, which could be a low-cost way to alleviate peak visitation at Grand Ravines.

Review how marketing of connected park groups to determine how to best promote them to the public and also how to compare them with other regional-level destinations:

- Ottawa Sands, North Beach, and North Ottawa Dunes
- Grand Ravines and Grand River Park (and any future connections to GVSU)
- Consider how best to market the assemblage of parks along the Bass River
- Notes about the chart on the left:
  - For a visit to be considered, it must be 10 minutes or longer. For trails, all visits are counted.
  - For some locations, there was insufficient data for the Placer.ai site to generate visitation data. In this case, it would be assumed that visitation at these sites are lower than the average visitation listed on the chart.
  - Several sites were not comparable pre-March
     2020 as the OCPRC did not manage them or they
     had only been OCPRC possession for a short time.

### Average Monthly Visits for Lake Michigan Beach and Non-Beach Parks (Based on Placer.ai data from Jan 2017 to June 2024)



On average, six of top ten most-visited are beach parks.

Beach parks represent 36% of overall average annual visits.

In Fiscal Year 2023, beach parks accounted for 62% of all out-of-state visitors.

Visitation of non-beach parks vary significantly from beach parks.

Changes in visitation patterns also vary significantly.

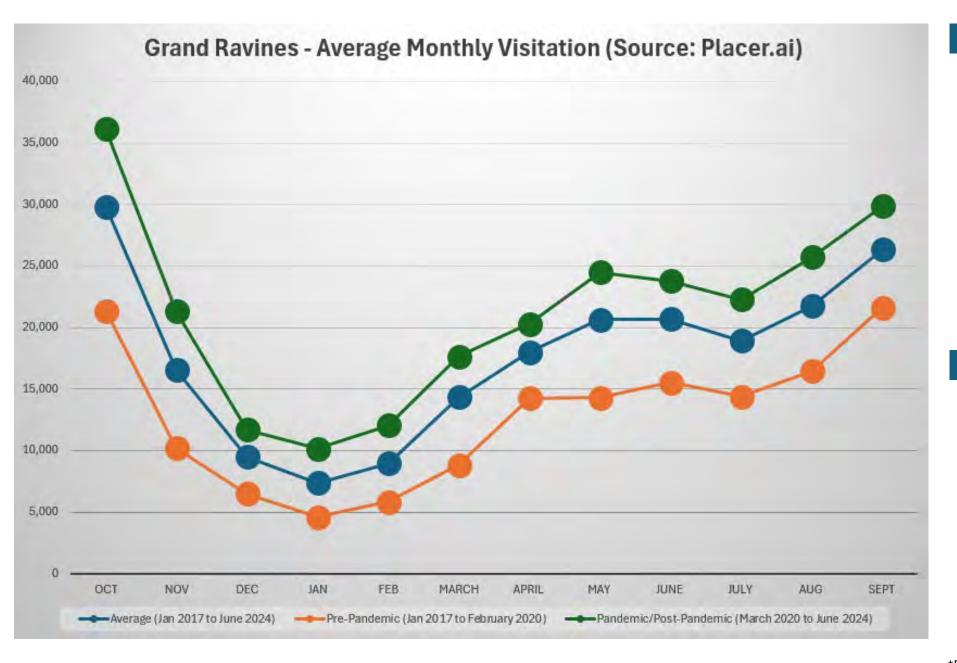
8 of top 10 numerical increases visitation are not beach parks.

Many of these increases did involve improvements that would also drive increased visitation.



## Parks – Insights on Visitation to Top 20 Sites

### **Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #1 Grand Ravines**



#### Notable Numbers

#### November average is nearing July.

The patterns suggest that the visitation is somewhat influenced by presence of the student population of the Grand Valley State University Allendale Campus.

Grand Ravines had the highest average numerical increase from prepandemic annual average to postpandemic annual average (101,585 visits).

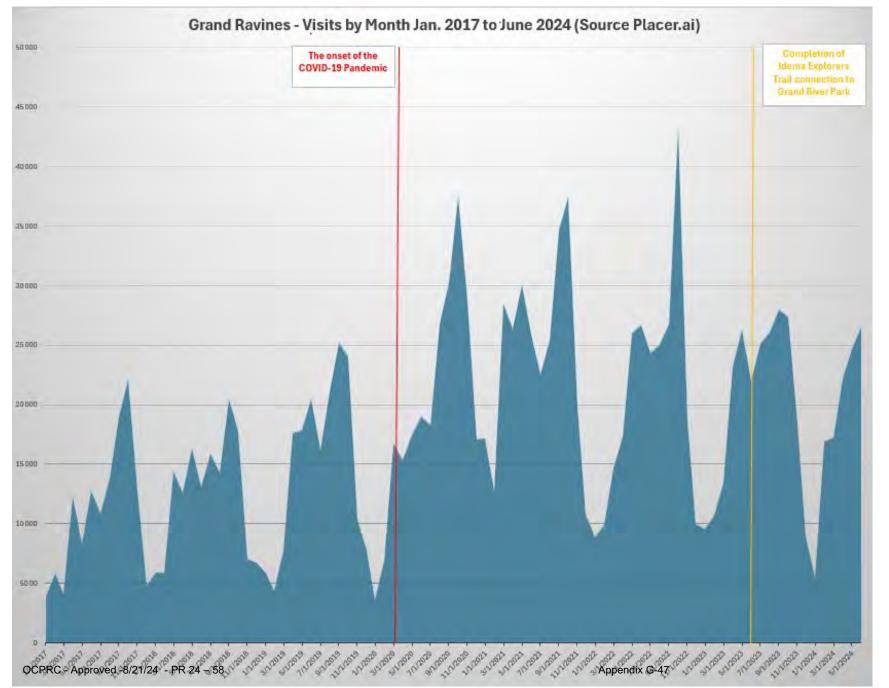
#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Grand Ravines was one of the two most popular OCPRC destinations for many local, regional, and out of state visitors.

Locally, this includes seven local units of government.

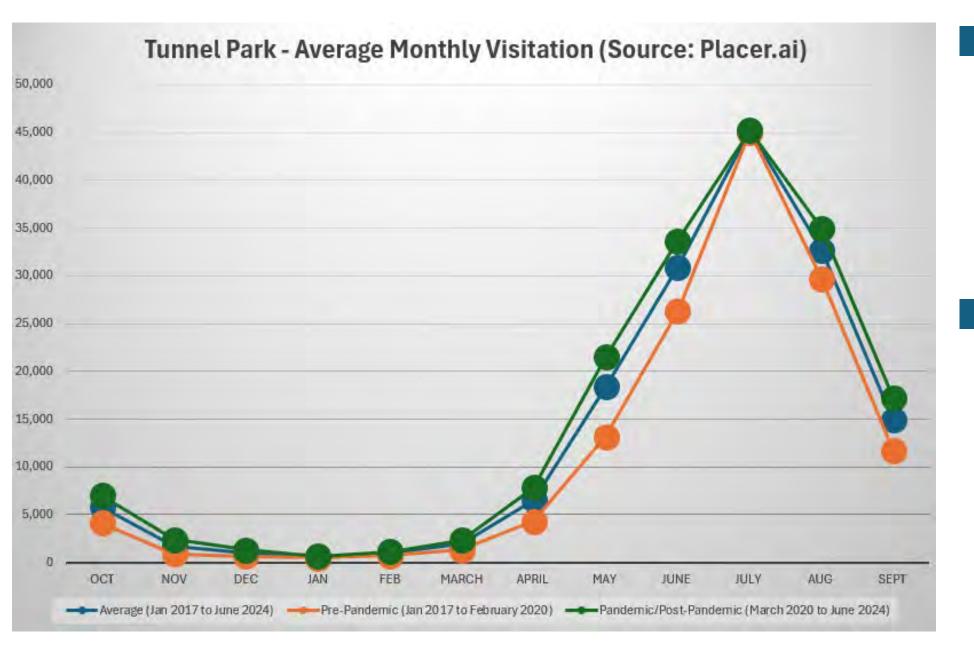
It was the most popular destination for residents of Kent County

## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #1 Grand Ravines



To-date, the completion the Bill Idema Nature Moraine Segment of the Idema Explorers Trail has not yet appeared to further increase visitation.

## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #2 Tunnel Park



#### **Notable Numbers**

July is the highest average visitation for any park.

The chart at right shows a very typical visitation pattern for beach parks.

Tunnel Park had the second highest average numerical increase from prepandemic annual average to postpandemic annual average (36,816 visits).

#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

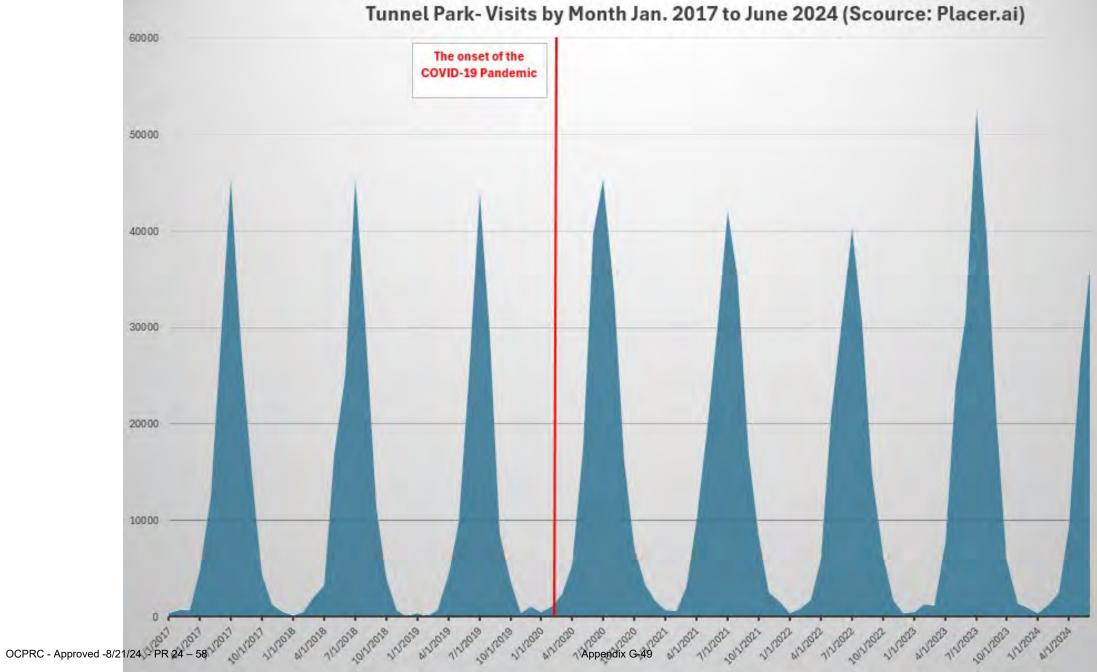
Tunnel Park was one of the two most popular OCPRC destinations for many local, regional, and out of state visitors.

Locally, this includes four local units of government.

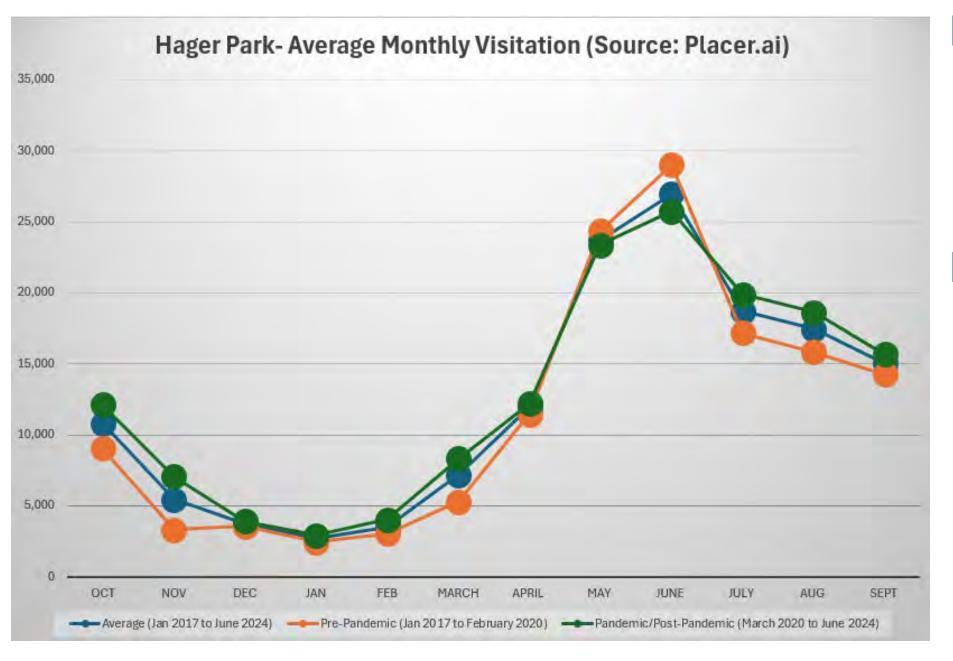
Tunnel Park was the most popular destination for visitors from beyond the four-county regional and for out of state visitors.

Regional and out of state visits more than doubled local visits.

## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #2 Tunnel Park



## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #3 Hager Park



#### Notable Numbers

While the overall average increased for Hager Park, the month-to-month visitation patterns shifted significantly.

It is not immediately clear why the pattern shifted in May and June.

#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Hager Park was one of the two most popular OCPRC destinations for many local visitors.

Locally, this includes six local units of government.

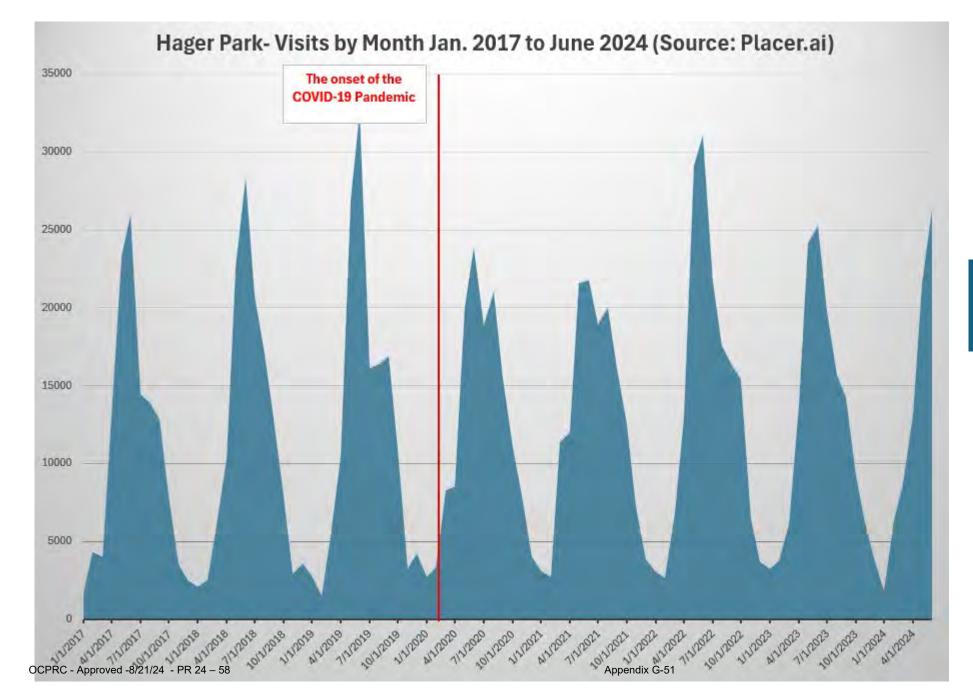
Hager Park was the second most popular destination for residents of Kent County.

\*Based on Fiscal Year 2023.

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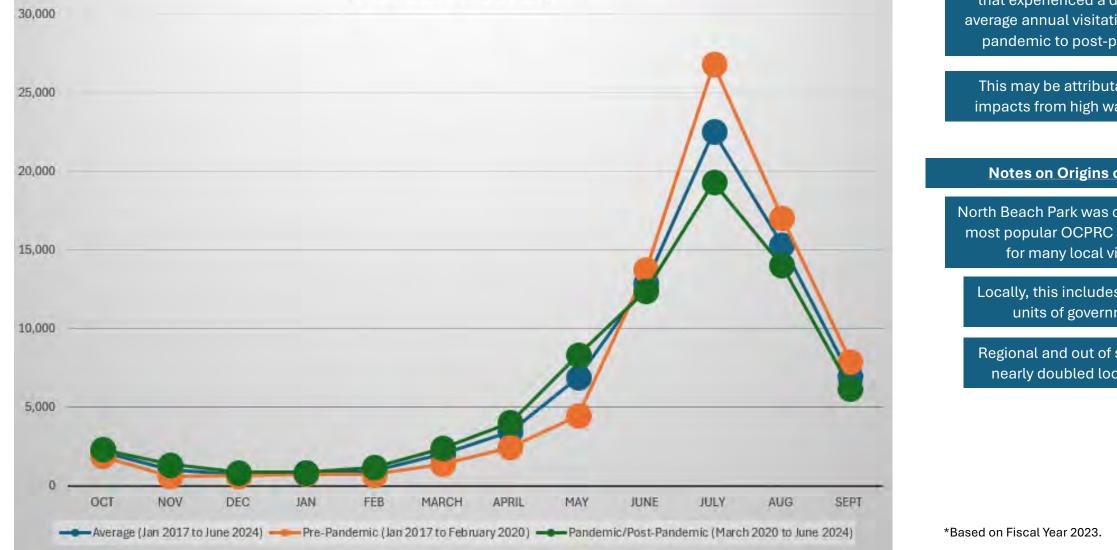
Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #3 Hager Park



In 2020 and 2021, the lower number of spring and summer visitation was likely due to the closure of rental facilities.

### **Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #4 North Beach Park**

## North Beach Park - Average Monthly Visitation (Source: Placer.ai)



#### **Notable Numbers**

North Beach is one of three parks that experienced a decrease in average annual visitation from prepandemic to post-pandemic.

This may be attributable to the impacts from high water levels.

#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

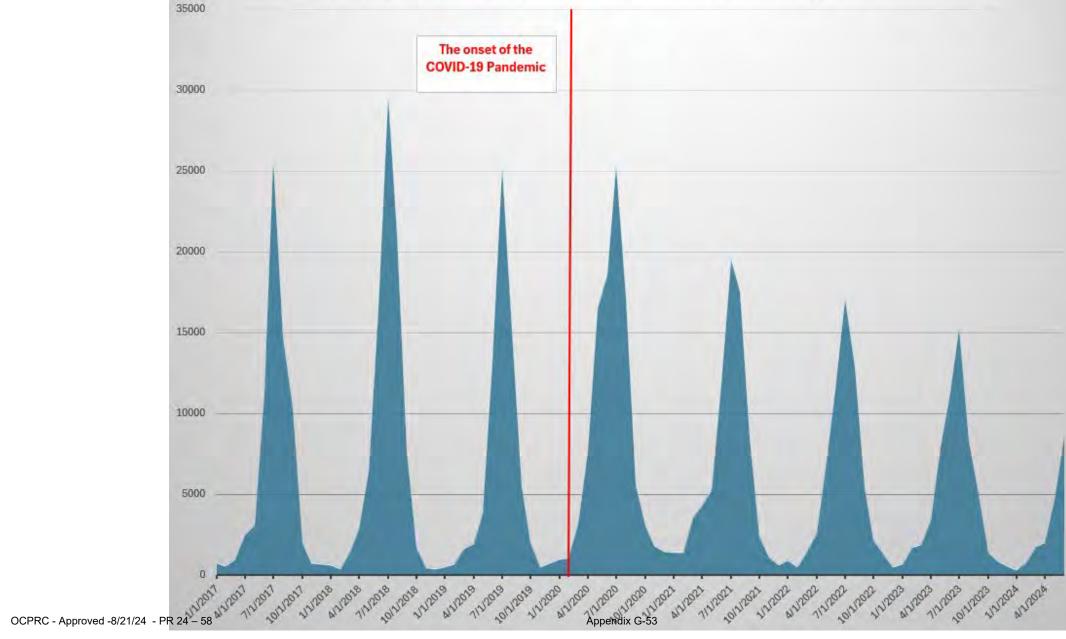
North Beach Park was one of the two most popular OCPRC destinations for many local visitors.

Locally, this includes four local units of government.

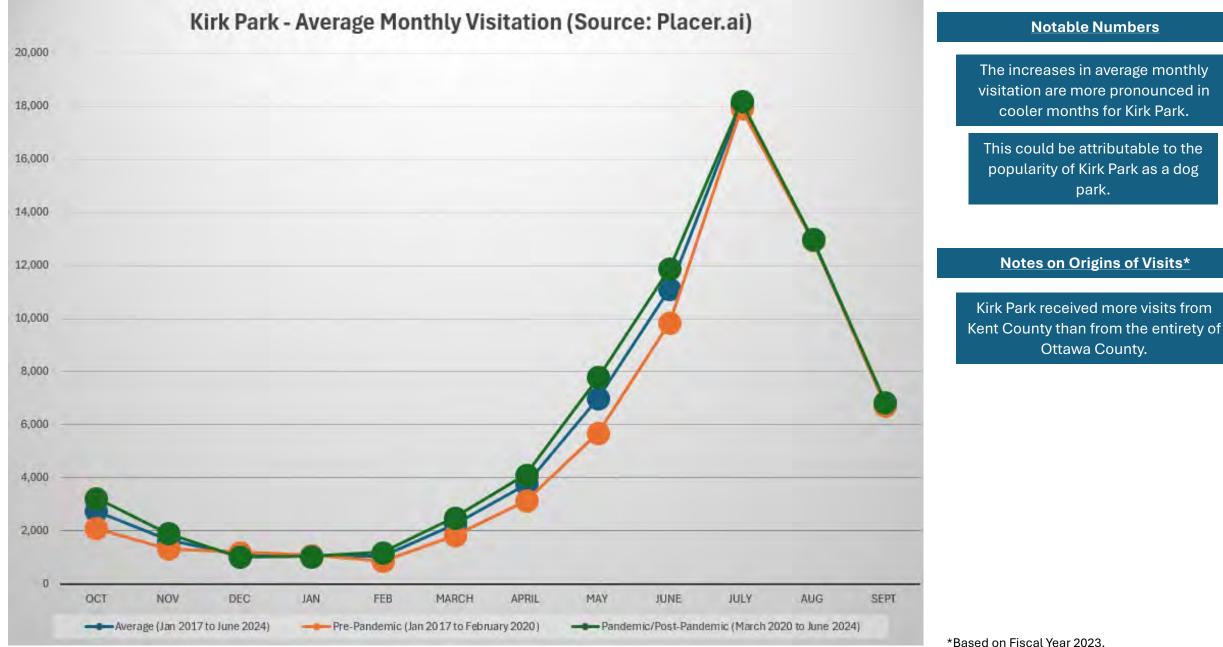
Regional and out of state visits nearly doubled local visits.

## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #4 North Beach Park

North Beach Park- Visits by Month Jan. 2017 to June 2024 (Source: Placer.ai)



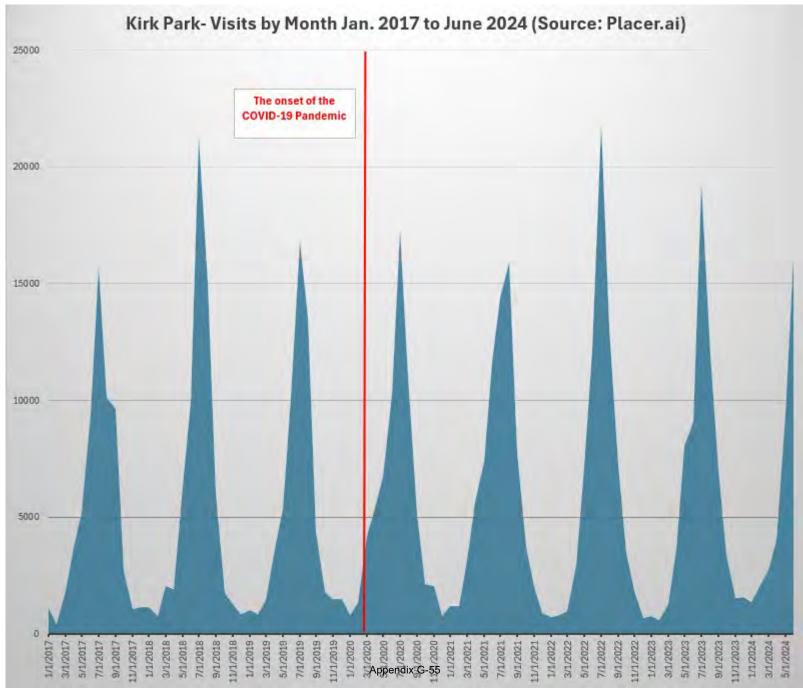
## **Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #5 Kirk Park**



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## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #5 Kirk Park

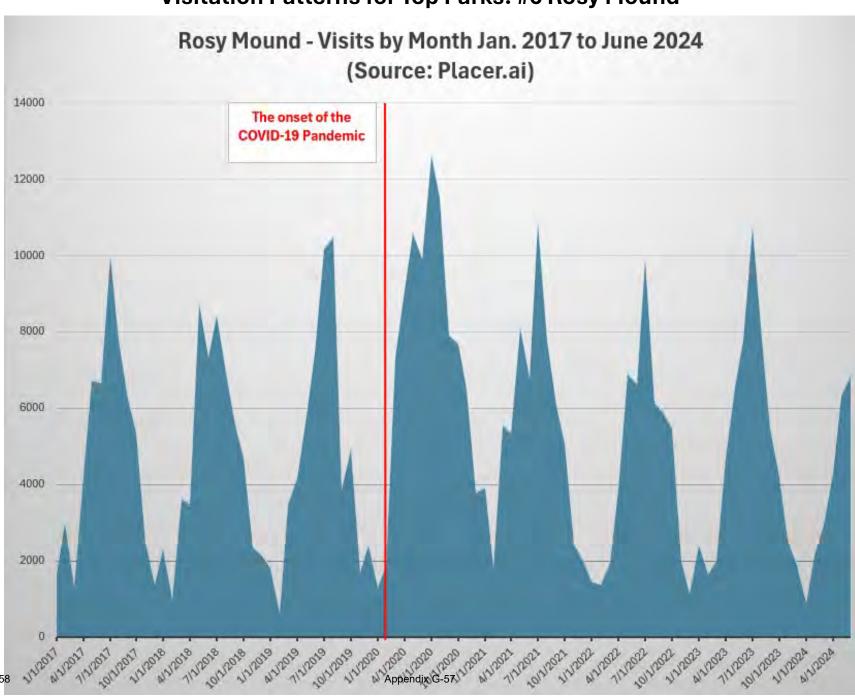


### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #6 Rosy Mound

## Rosy Mound - Average Monthly Visitation (Source: Placer.ai)



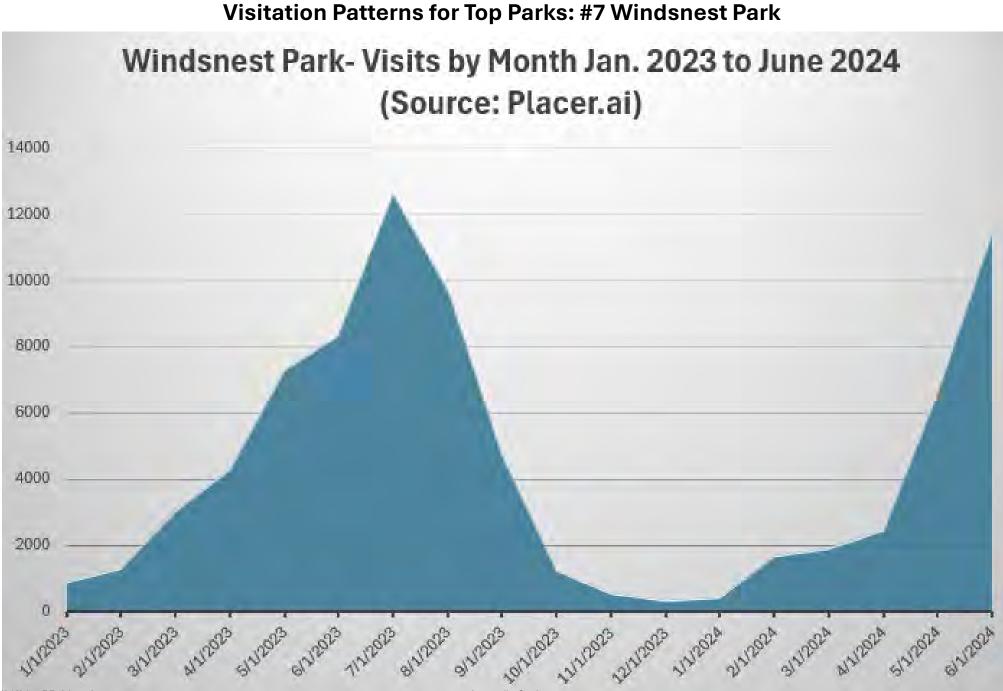
**Notable Numbers** 



Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #6 Rosy Mound

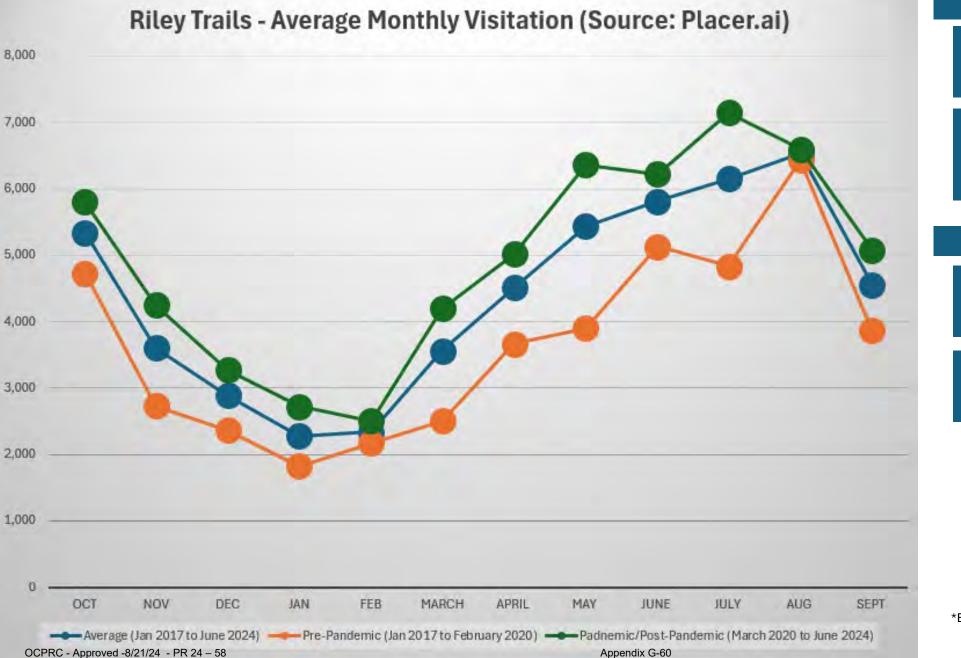
### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #7 Windsnest Park





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### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #8 Riley Trails



#### **Notable Numbers**

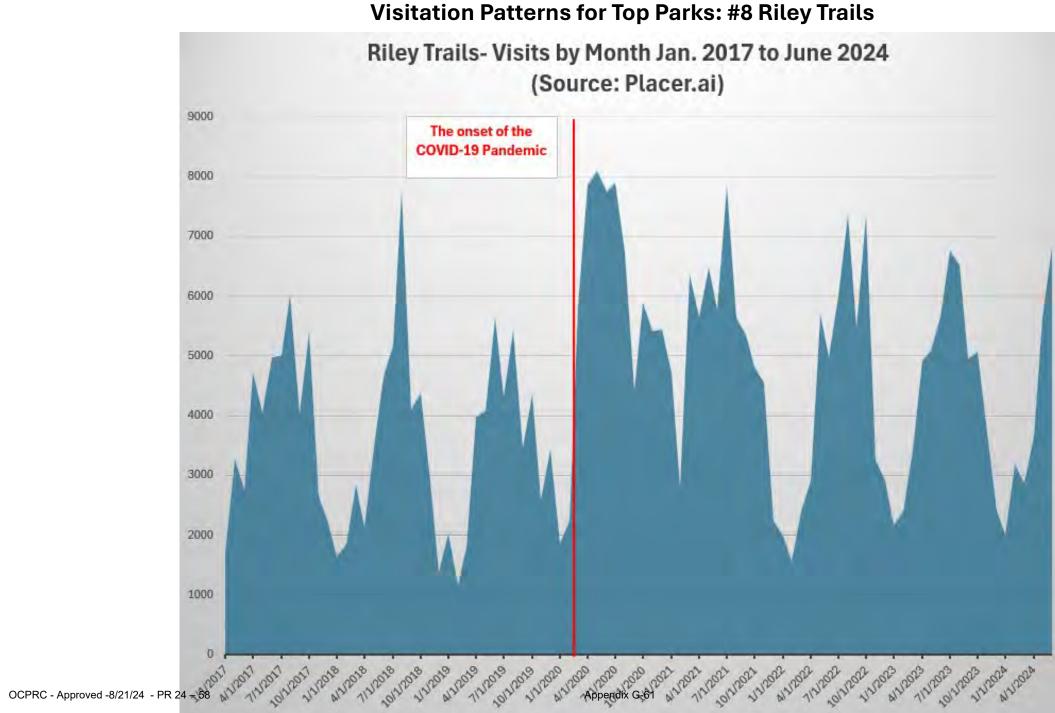
Compared to some parks, Riley Trails visitation remains relative steady from March to November.

Average visitation is considerable in light of modest historical capital investment and relatively few amenities.

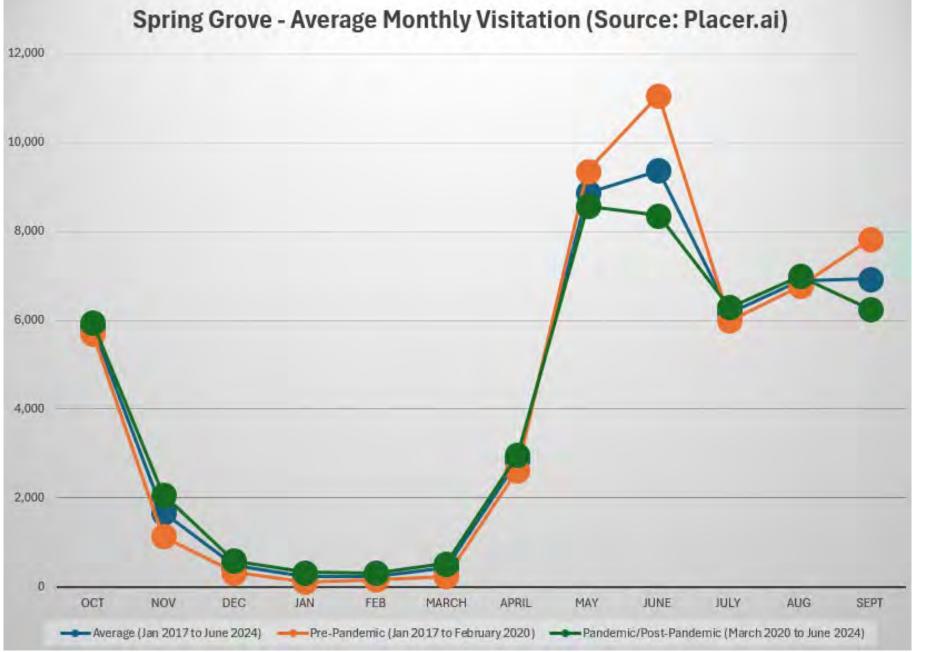
#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Riley Trails was the second most popular destination for residents of Park and Holland townships.

It was also the second most popular destination for visitors from Allegan County.



### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #9 Spring Grove



#### **Notable Numbers**

Spring Grove is one of three parks where average visitation has declined.

This decline appears to be related to significant decline in visitation in June and September.

#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Spring Grove was the most popular destination for residents of Jamestown Township.

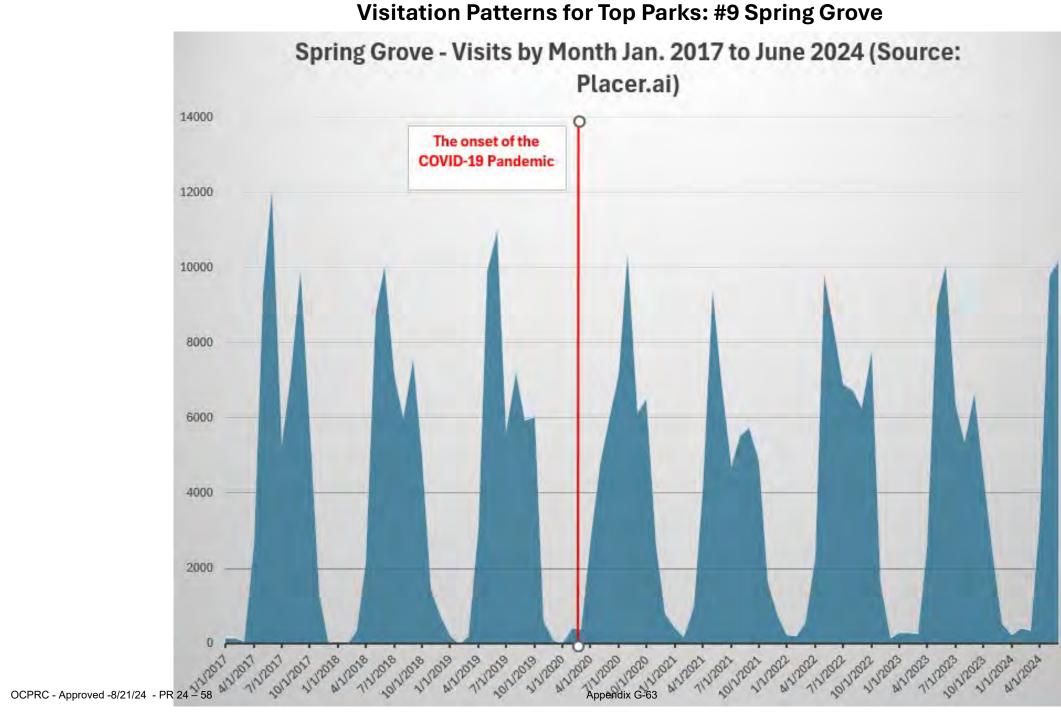
During FY2023, Spring Grove received more visits from outside of Ottawa County than from within.

In Fiscal Year 2023, visits from Kent County accounted for 32% of visits.

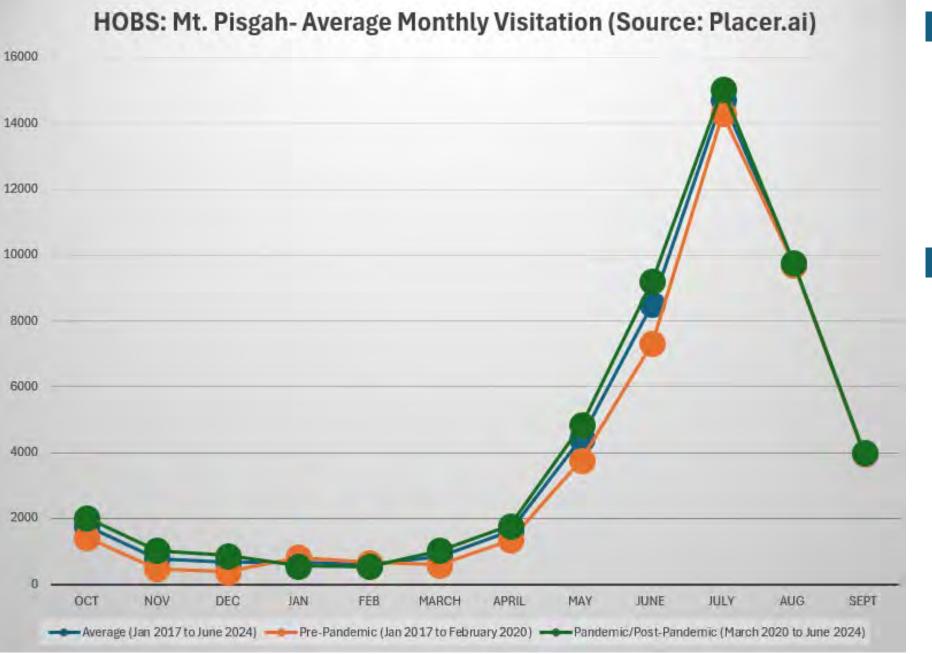
\*Based on Fiscal Year 2023.

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### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #10 HOBS Mt. Pisgah



#### **Notable Numbers**

This does not include visitation to Lake Macatawa boardwalk features.

Mt. Pisgah follows a typical beach park visitation pattern.

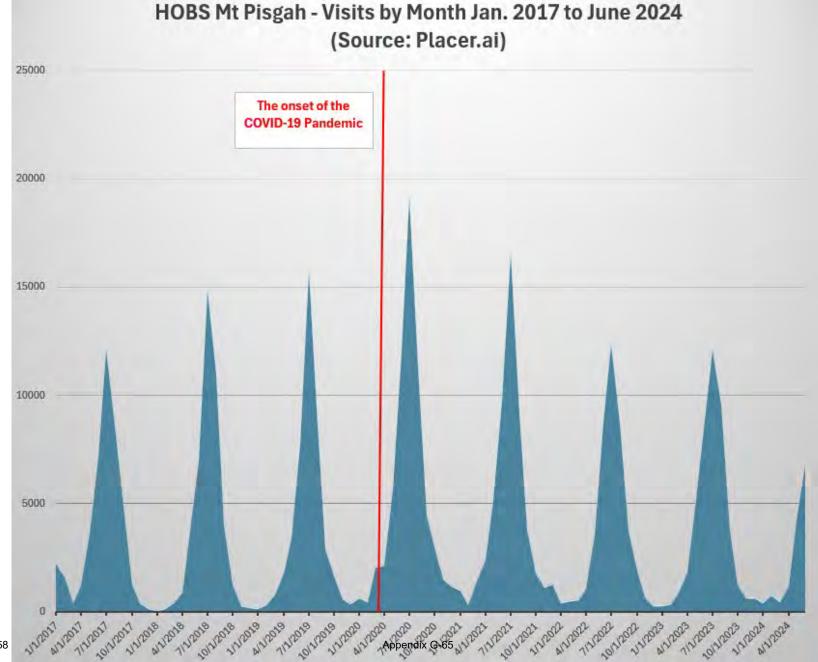
November and December doubled in average visitation post-pandemic.

### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

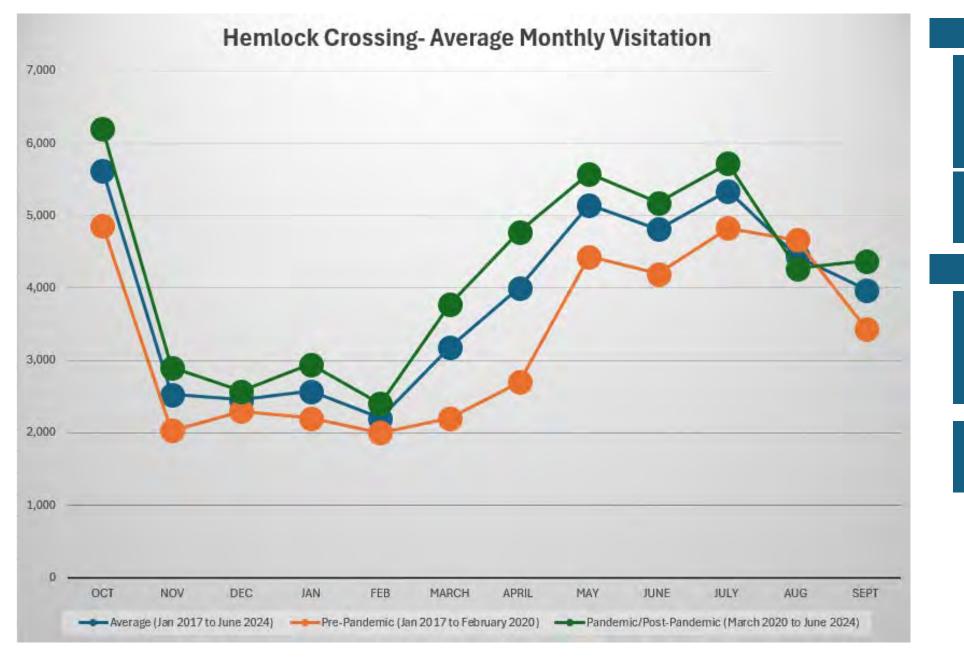
Mt. Pisgah received more visits from outside of Ottawa County than from within Ottawa County.

\*Based on Fiscal Year 2023.

## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #10 HOBS Mt. Pisgah



### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #11 Hemlock Crossing/Pine Bend



#### **Notable Numbers**

Hemlock Crossing has a somewhat unique visitation pattern, though both Riley Trails and Hemlock Crossing have a dip in visitation in July.

March and April increased significantly (over 70%) in visitation post-pandemic.

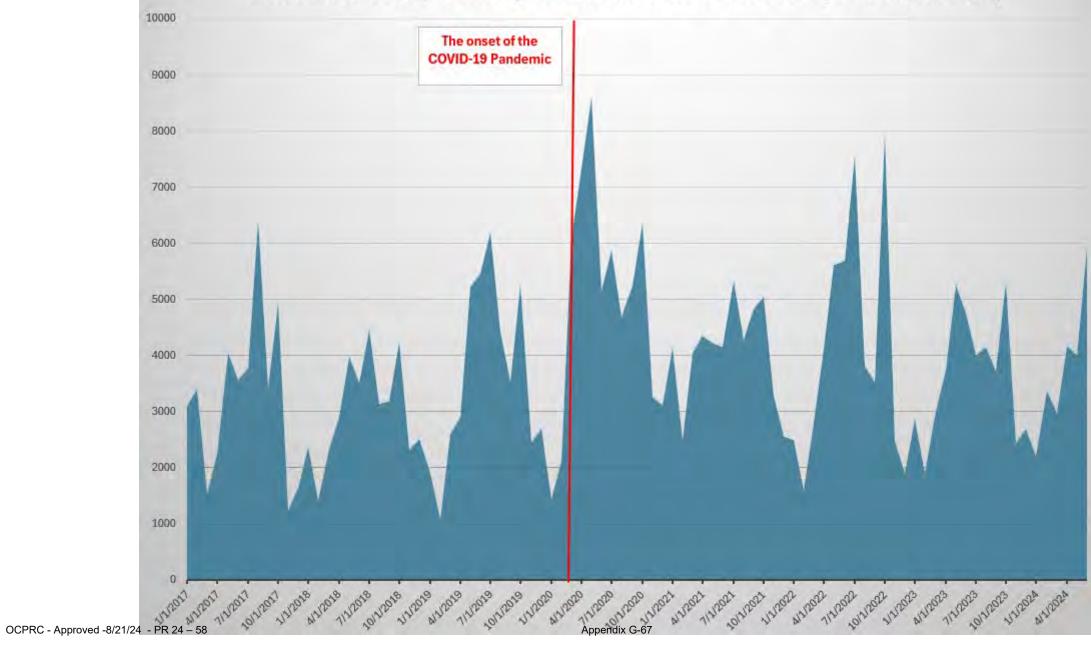
#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Hemlock Crossing was one of the most popular destinations for residents of Olive Township as well as residents from the cities of Grand Haven and Zeeland.

During FY2023, Holland and Park township residents were the two top visitors to Hemlock Crossing.

### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #11 Hemlock Crossing/Pine Bend

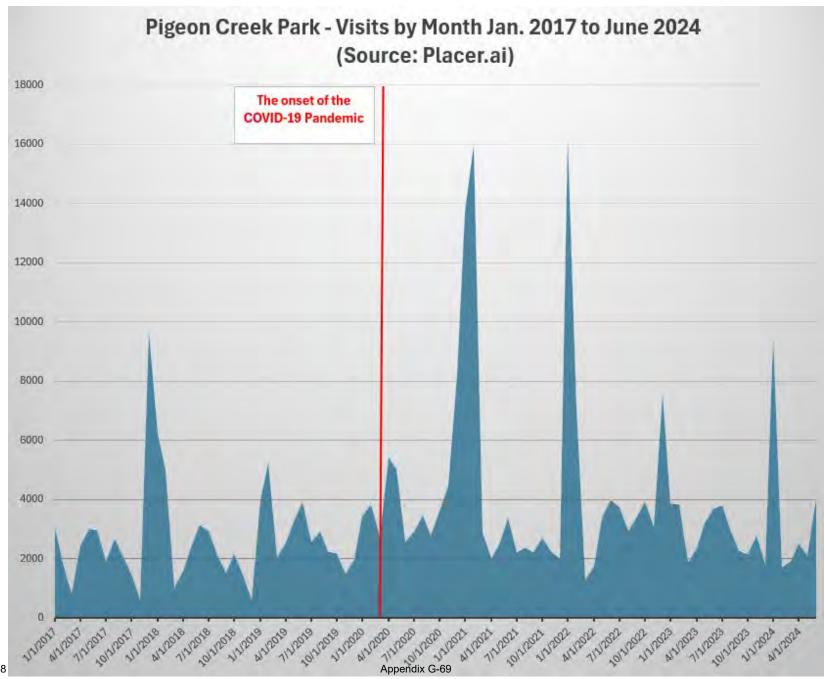
Hemlock Crossing - Visits by Month Jan. 2017 to June 2024 (Source: Placer.ai)



### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #12 – Pigeon Creek Park

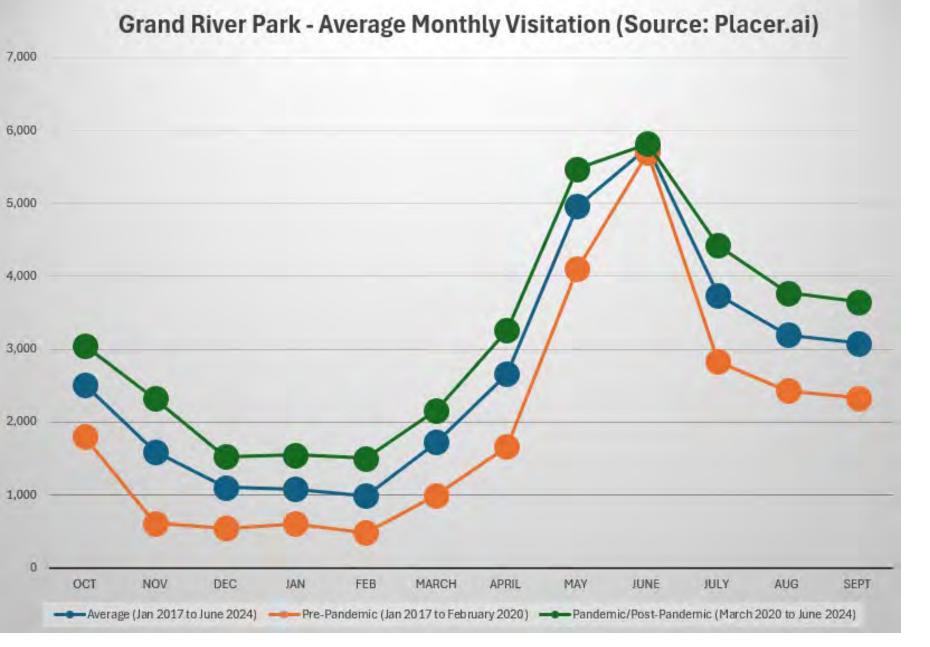


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Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #12 Pigeon Creek Park

### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #13 Grand River Park



#### **Notable Numbers**

Grand River Park experienced the sixth largest numerical increase in average visitation post-pandemic.

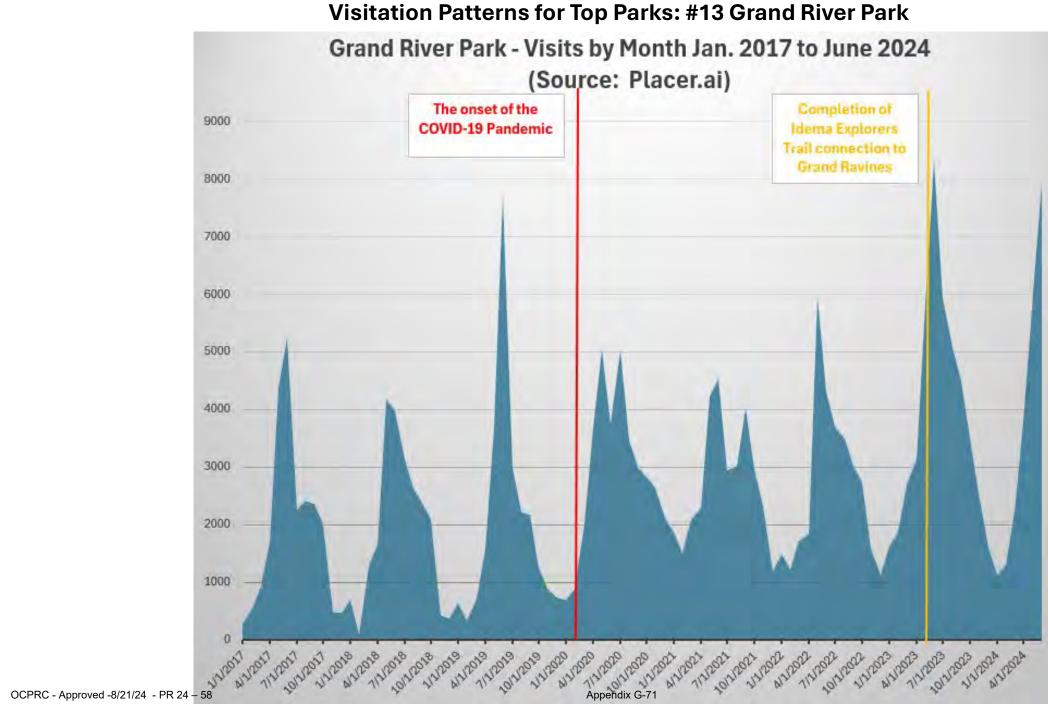
Increases were experienced in every month.

Some of these increased could be a result of the recently completed Bill Idema Moraine Nature Segment of the Idema Explorers Trail, but it is early to tell at this point.

#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

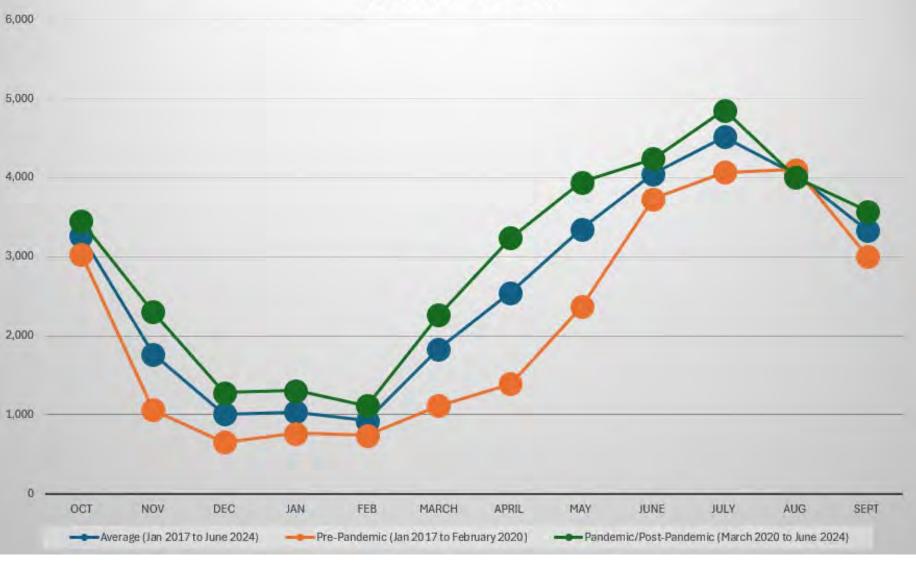
Residents from Georgetown Township frequently visited Grand River Park (relative to other origin locations).

Visitation from other local units otherwise quite low in comparison, indicating it is not functioning as a regional destination that it now should be. However, visitation from Kent County was significant.



### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #14 Upper Macatawa Natural Area

# Upper Macatawa Natural Area- Average Monthly Visitation (Source: Placer.ai)



#### Notable Numbers

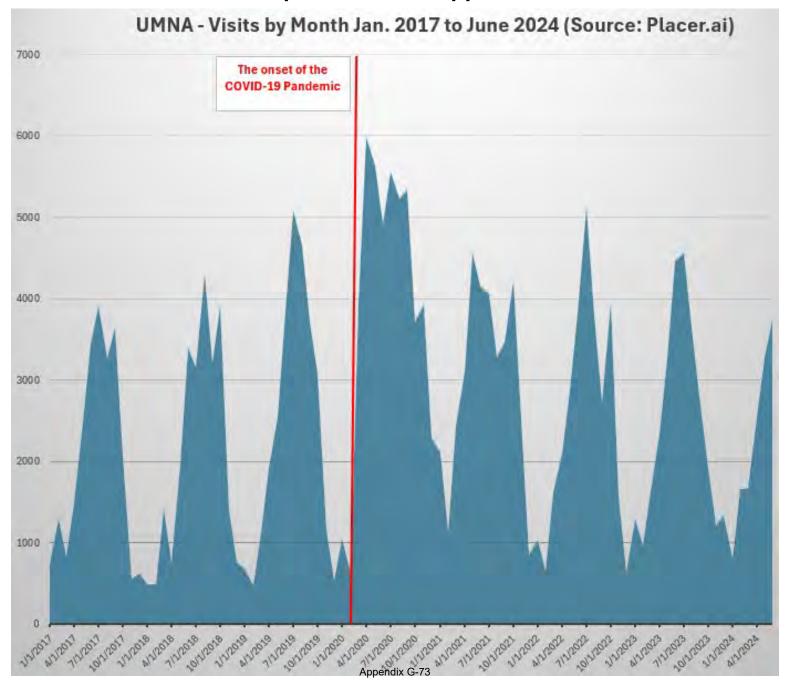
Similar to Riley Trails, visitation remains relative steady from March to November for the Upper Macatawa Natural Area (UMNA).

### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

UMNA was one of the popular destination for residents of Zeeland Township and the City of Zeeland.

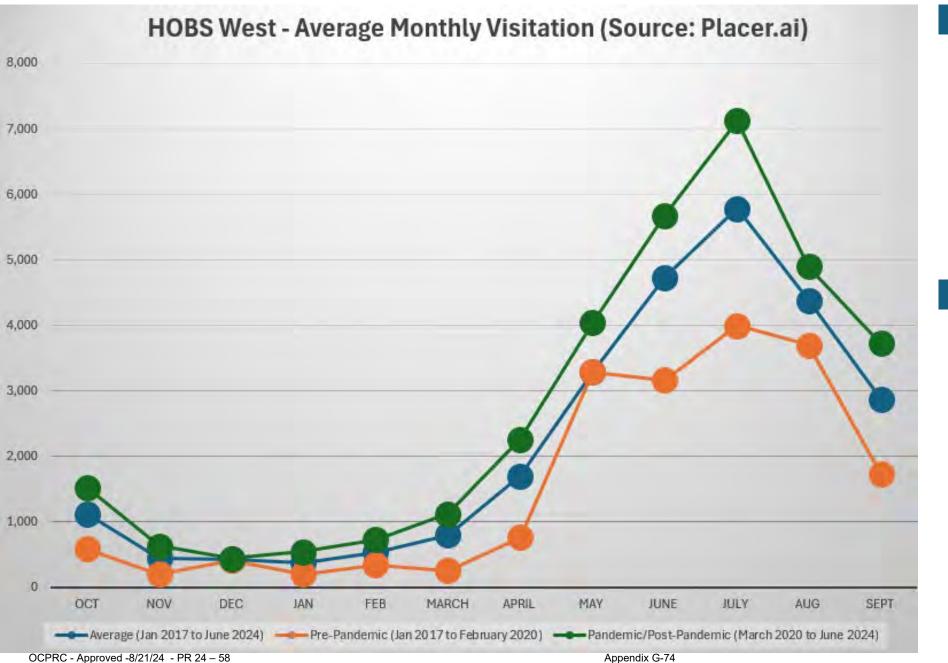
During FY2023, Holland Township residents were one of the top visitors to UMNA (after Zeeland Township residents).

In Fiscal Year 2023, regionally, Allegan County residents frequently visits UMNA in FY2023.



Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #14 – Upper Macatawa Natural Area

### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #15 HOBS Black Lake Boardwalk West



#### **Notable Numbers**

These visitation numbers include Ottawa Beach Marina, which was developed and opened in 2019 (see next slide for historic monthly visitation).

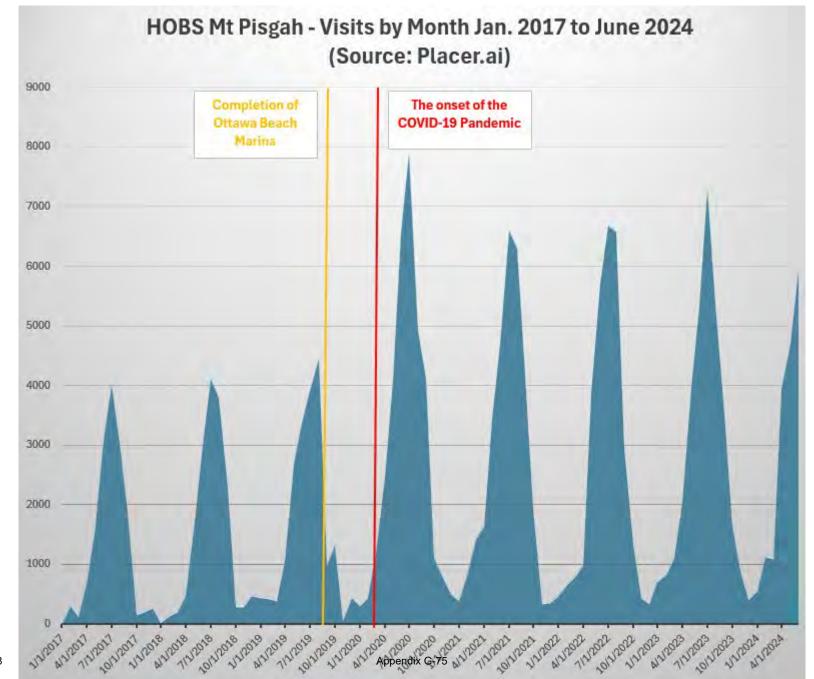
The marina improvements obviously increased visitation.

#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Black Lake Boardwalk West received more visits from outside of Ottawa County than from within Ottawa County.

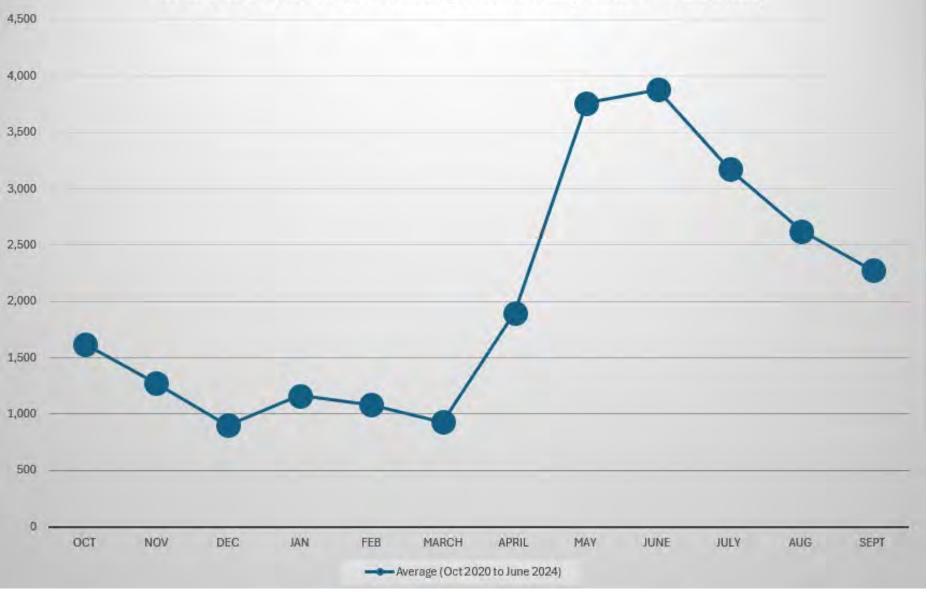
The majority of these visits originated from locations outside the four-county region.

### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #15 HOBS Black Lake Boardwalk West



### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #16 Bend Area

## Bend Area - Average Monthly Visitation (Source: Placer.ai)



#### Notable Numbers

The average visitation shown on right only includes the timeframe after the 2020 expansion of the Bend Area and subsequent development of the natural-surface trail system.

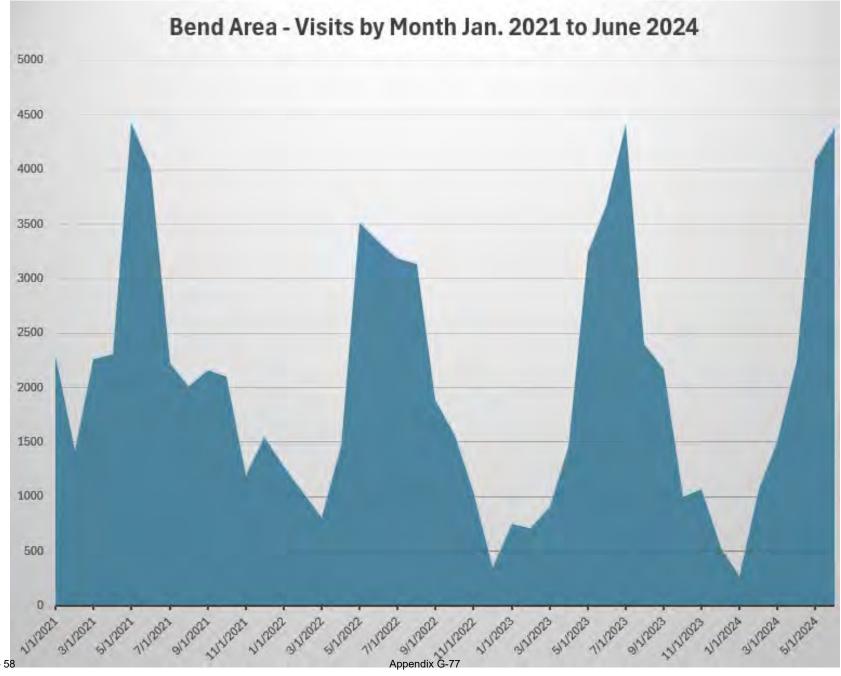
The expansion and improvements also coincided with the completion of a connection of the Idema Explorers Trail to the Bend Area.

Considering the relatively minimal improvements at the Bend Area, it appears poised to be a very popular park with future expansions and improvements.

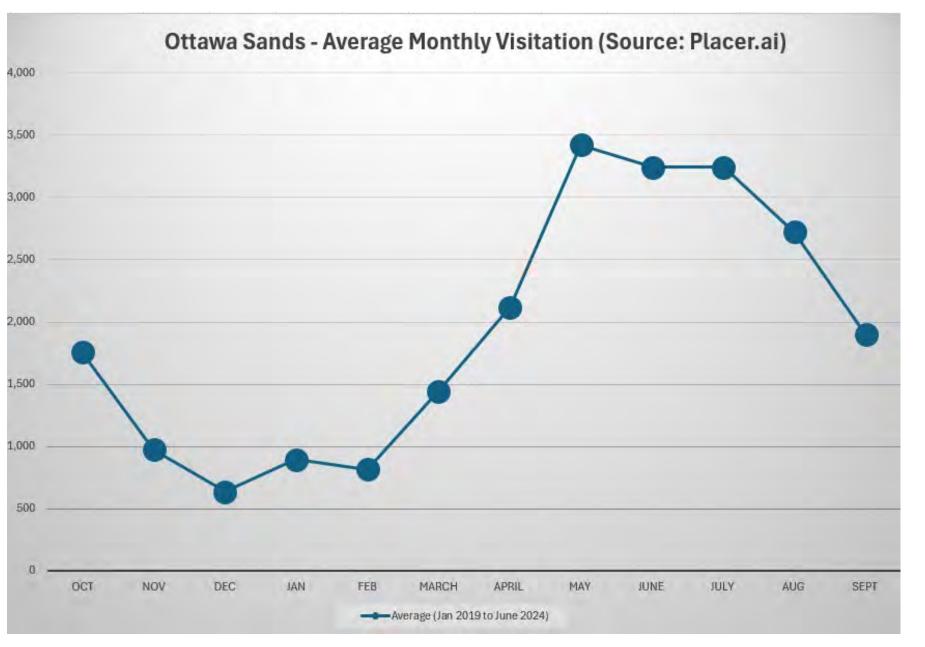
#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

During FY2023, Georgetown Township residents were one of the top visitors to the Bend Area followed by residents of Kent County.





### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #17 Ottawa Sands



#### Notable Numbers

The average visitation shown on right only includes the timeframe after the acquisition and opening of Ottawa Sands.

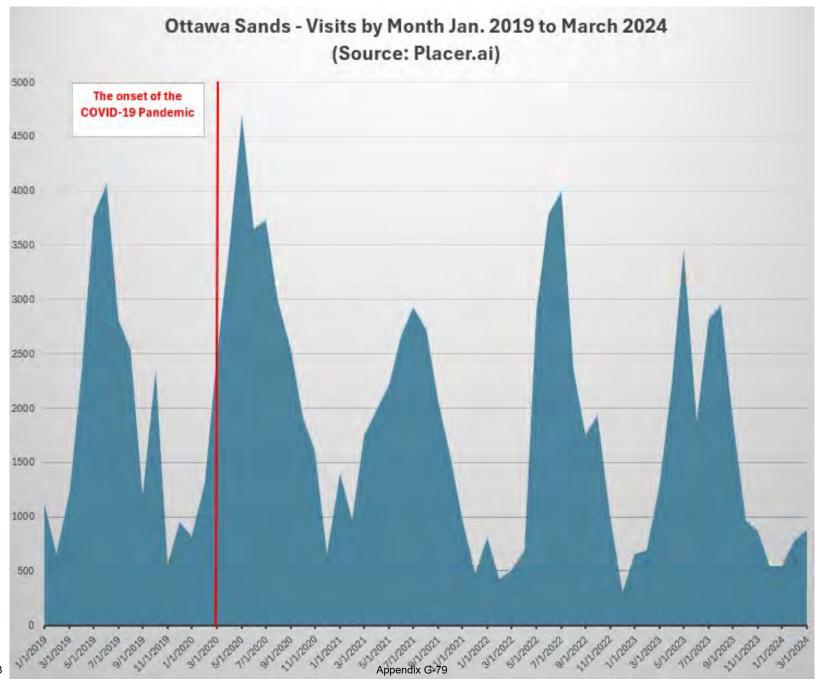
This does not include visitation numbers after the closing of the park for improvements.

These numbers will provide a solid baseline for future comparisons in light of the major improvements.

### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Ottawa Sands was the most popular destination for residents of the Spring Lake Village and the second most popular for Spring Lake Township residents.

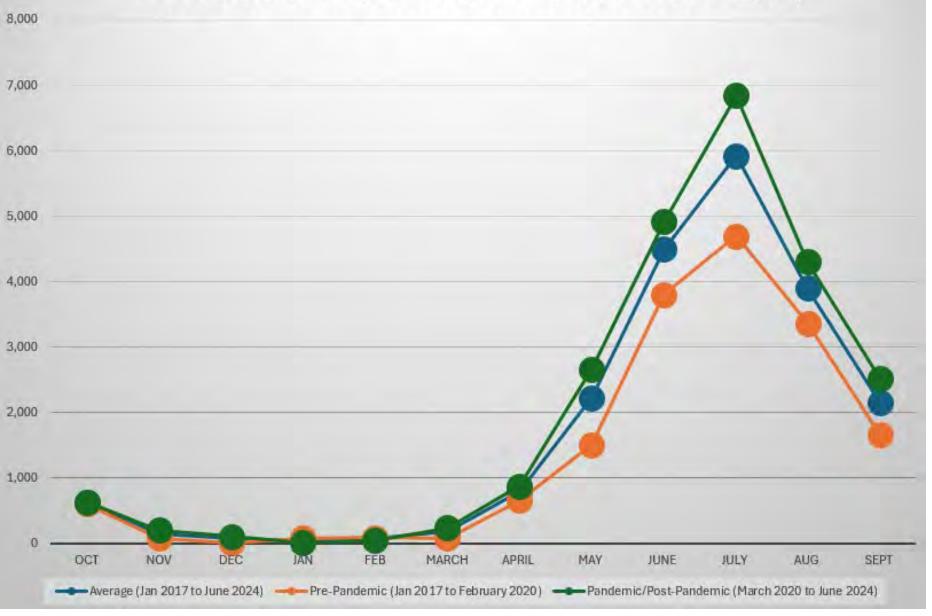
During FY2023, out of state residents and residents of Kent County were one of the top visitors to Ottawa Sands, demonstrating its regional potential.



Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #17 Ottawa Sands

### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #18 Grose Park

# Grose Park - Average Monthly Visitation (Source: Placer.ai)



#### Notable Numbers

Grose Park follows the visitation of a typical beach park.

Winter visitation is very minimal, which makes sense given that it is closed in the off-season.

#### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

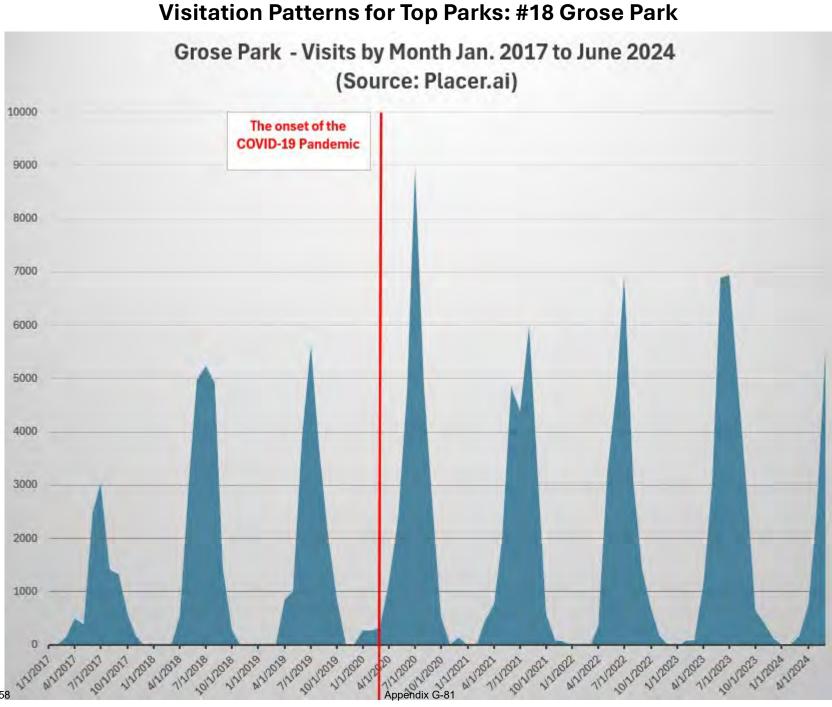
Grose Park was the most popular OCPRC destination for residents of Chester Township as well as residents of Muskegon County.

Visits from outside of Ottawa County were nearly quadruple the number of visits from inside Ottawa County.

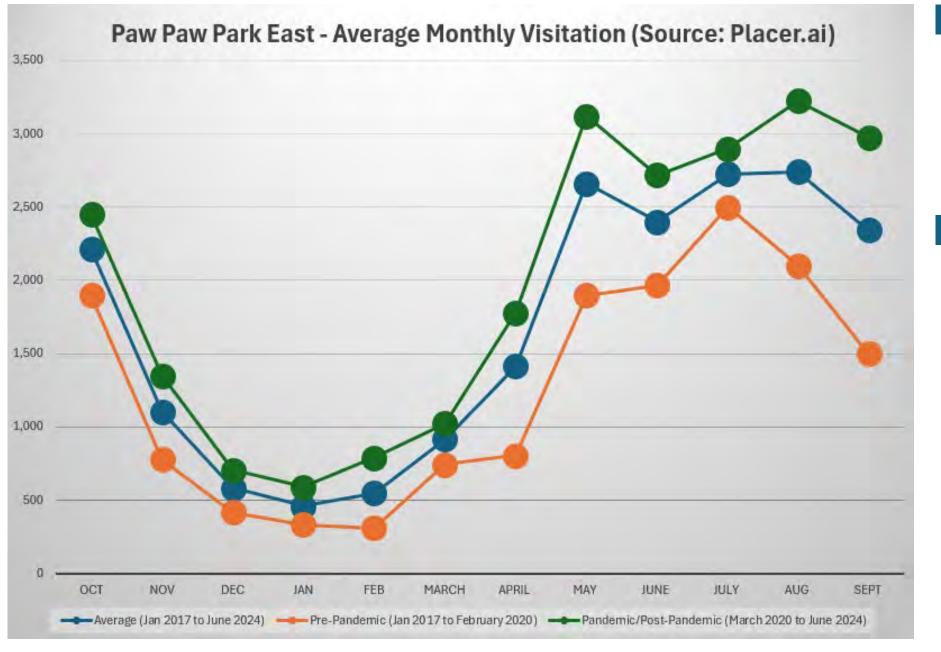
\*Based on Fiscal Year 2023.

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### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #19 Paw Paw Park East



#### Notable Numbers

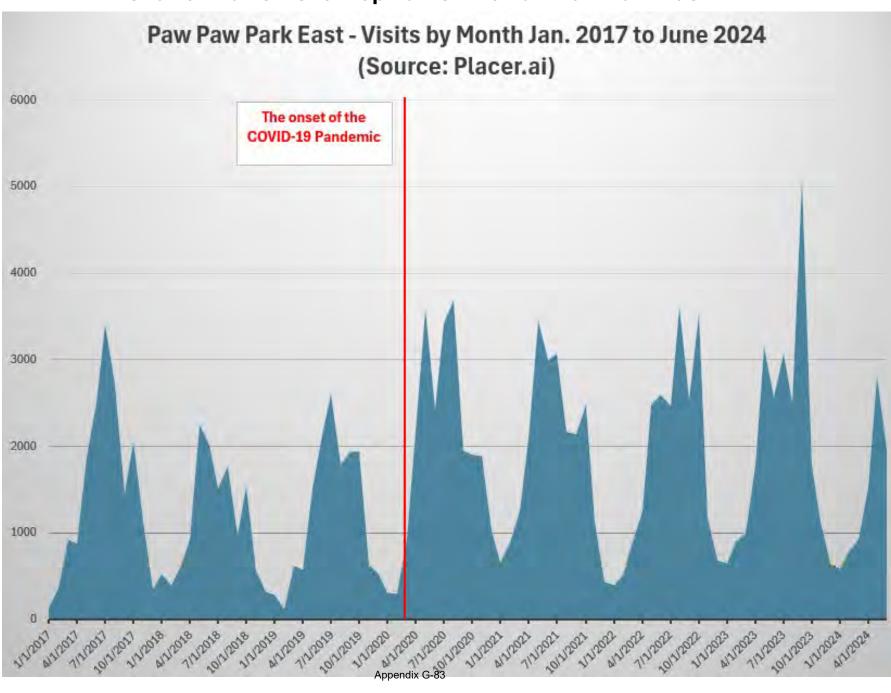
It is unclear why visitation in May and August increased significantly versus pre-pandemic visitation patterns.

Visitation increases in Fall is also notable.

### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

During FY2023, residents form Holland Township and the City of Holland were the most frequent visitors to Paw Paw Park East (this was also the case for Paw Paw West).

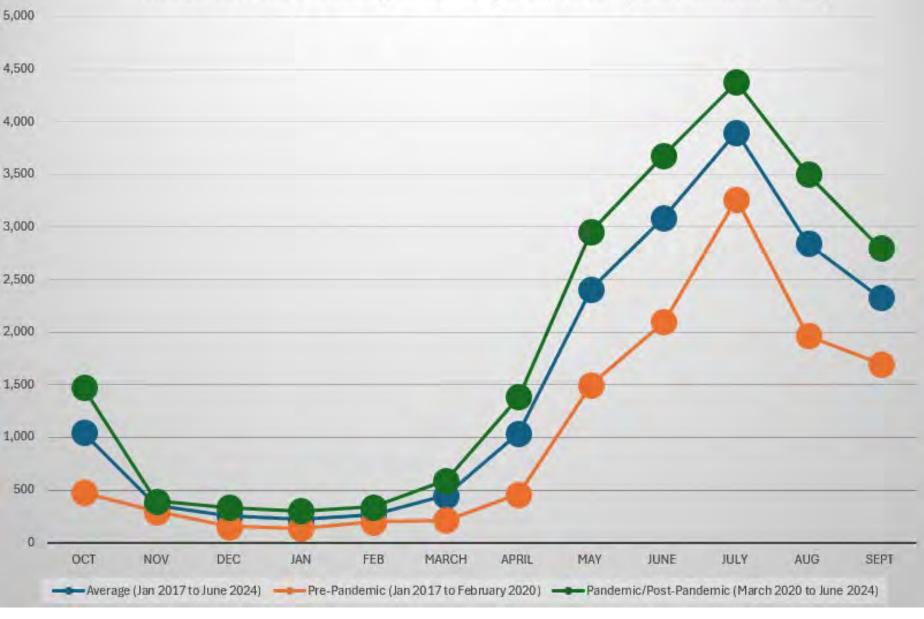
\*Based on Fiscal Year 2023.



Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #19 Paw Paw Park East

### Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #20 Riverside Park

# Riverside Park- Average Monthly Visitation (Source: Placer.ai)



#### Notable Numbers

Riverside Park has had a series of renovations that are likely contributing to the significant increase in visitation form April to October.

The future Idema Explorers Trail connection to Bass River State Recreation Area will likely increase visitation.

### Notes on Origins of Visits\*

Riverside Park was the second popular destination for residents of Robinson Township.

During FY2023, residents form Kent County were the most frequent visitors to Riverside Park.

\*Based on Fiscal Year 2023.

## Visitation Patterns for Top Parks: #20 Riverside Park

