



Ottawa County Parks &
Recreation Commission

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Strategic Plan – **DRAFT FOR REVIEW**



2024

Acknowledgements

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

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Ottawa County Parks &
Recreation Commission



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A Letter from the Director

(Letter from Director to be inserted here)



Introduction & Overview



Ottawa County Parks &
Recreation Commission

Introduction & Overview

Welcome

Ottawa County parks offer 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 Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission (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 while aligning strategic efforts to better fit the future needs and desires of Ottawa County.

Context for the Strategic Plan

The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan serves as a compass for 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 2021.¹ 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,² home to nearly 300,000 people in 2022.³ As one of Michigan's fastest growing counties, 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.



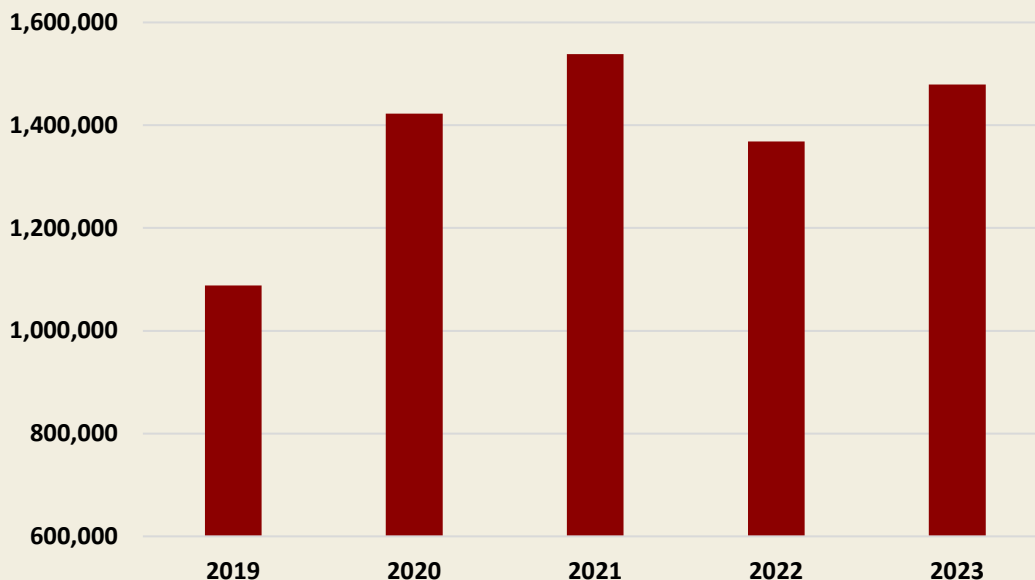
Park Attendance

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation acquired over 7,400 acres of land since its inception in 1987. OCPRC leads regional environmental stewardship efforts and provides rich nature-based opportunities to visitors.

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 OCPRC has made efforts to diversify its funding base, the Parks Millage remains the foundation of OCPRC’s revenue source. Annual park visits 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. ⁴

The significant growth in the parks systems requires additional resources to sustain maintenance and operations of these new greenway corridors and trails.

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



County Parks Map

The Ottawa County parks are highly valued amongst Ottawa County residents and sought out by tourists for the vast recreational and educational experiences offered.

1.48 M

Times the Parks were visited in 2023.

839,200

Total number of unique park visitors in 2023.

Note – will replace map with new one from OCPRC

90%

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

68%

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



See Appendices B, C, and G for additional information.

Community Benefits

The Ottawa County parks serve as a significant economic and employment catalyst, contributing to the County’s economy through (i) direct spending by 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 of the County.

Ottawa County parks have generated the following:

- \$6.4 million** in annual economic activity resulting from 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
- 1,082 jobs** in both permanent and temporary supported employment added

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.



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.



Attracts and retains professionals and retirees

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, investments, and goals. The Plan provides a strategic approach to accomplishing OCPRC's vision.

To develop a realistic and tangible strategic plan, 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, laid the foundation for OCPRC's Strategic Plan.

Stakeholder Engagement

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

Scientific Survey

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

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

Park User Data

OCPRC to provide text.

Comparative and Historical Analysis

OCPRC to provide text.

Stakeholder Engagement

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

OCPRC administered three surveys, 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, OCPRC leadership identified over 50 partner and support organizations, elected officials, and staff to participate in engagement sessions. Attendees participated in immersive engagement activities over three days to discuss the Parks' current state and envision goals and future priorities.



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 strategic 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 OCPRC, indicating the successful execution of the current mission (see *Appendix A, C, D, I*).
- 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, C, and D*).
- 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, D, and I*).
- Residents and stakeholders highly value conservation for sustainability, resiliency, and “nature’s sake” (see *Appendix D*).
- Greenway 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 I*).
- 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 (see *Appendix I*).
- 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, C, and D*).
- Divisions and support organizations should review their role within OCPRC and realign operations to the newly developed mission, vision, values, and strategic initiatives.
- 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 (see *Appendix A, C, D, and I*).
- Increased staffing levels are needed to help achieve the revised mission and new vision (see *Appendix A, C, D, and I*).
- Additional funding support is required to achieve revised mission and vision (see *Appendix A, C, D, and I*).

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.
- 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 H*).



02

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

Describes the **core purpose** of the OCPRC and why it exists, what it does, and who it serves.

Vision

Forward-looking, aspirational statement describing Ottawa County Parks and Recreation’s ideal future.

Values

Based on the Mission and Vision, these are the ideals that OCPRC strives to uphold when servicing the public.

Strategic Initiatives

In alignment with Ottawa County Parks and Recreation’s Mission, Vision, and Values, these initiatives serve as an **actionable roadmap and decision-making tools**.

Projects

Activities executed by OCPRC staff and stakeholders to implement the Strategic Plan and move toward the Commission's vision of the future. Project Themes are used throughout the Plan to summarize these activities.

Mission & Vision Statements

Mission Statement

The mission statement drives decision making and encompasses 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

Newly minted vision and values are required to accurately reflect the future and culture of Ottawa County Parks and Recreation. The vision describes OCPRC's ideal future and values describe what OCPRC stands for.

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission summarized its purpose and aspirations in the following vision statement:

The Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission will be a leader in creating a legacy of expansive, accessible, and biodiverse natural communities for all to enjoy.



Commission Values

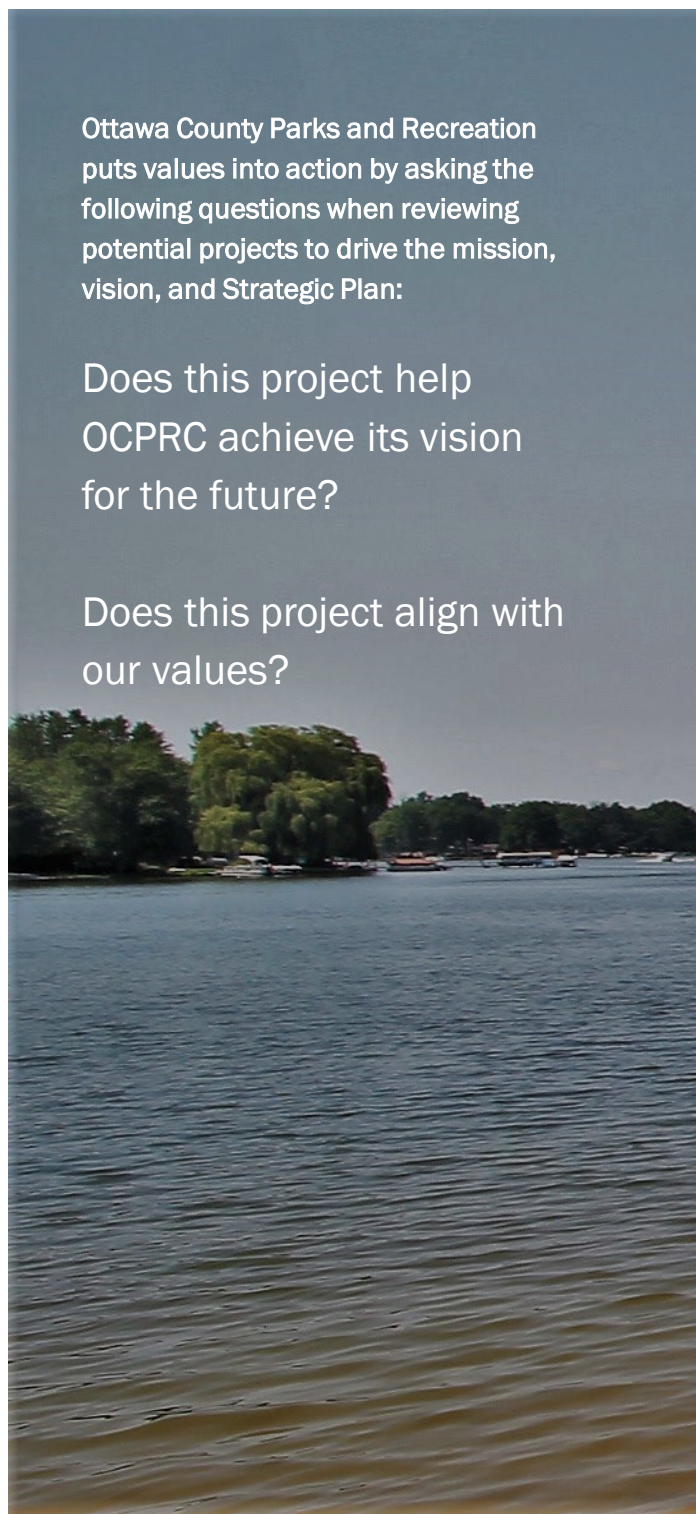
OCPRC's values are the foundations of its mission, vision, and strategic initiatives and serve as a guide for the Commission's actions, reflecting the culture of the parks and staff. Values set the tone of how Parks staff engage with visitors, partners, and each other.

- ✔ **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 parks 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 science-based decision making.

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation 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 OCPRC achieve its vision for the future?

Does this project align with our values?



Strategic Initiatives

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

The 5 Strategic Initiatives Map:





Connectivity

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

Fostering connectivity throughout Ottawa County parks brings people to the parks, and parks to the people. Ottawa County parks 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, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation is a community builder.

82%

Agree that the Parks Commission should provide leadership in completing a County-wide multi-use trail system.

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.





Community Engagement

Ottawa County Parks 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 OCPRC to build community within the parks system, improve information sharing, and recommit to a vision of parks for all.

The Strategic Plan challenges 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, OCPRC commits to minimizing park barriers to create spaces for everyone by improving park trails and pathways and the usability of park facilities.

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 community-wide leadership in engaging the public to experience nature.

88%

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

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. 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.





Conservation

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

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation 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.

OCPRC is a regional leader in 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.

At times, active interventions are needed to restore and/or enhance natural communities, providing new or improved habitat or creating green infrastructure. These interventions with flora and fauna can improve air and water quality.

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





Organizational Quality

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

85%

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

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 an annual visitor count exceeding 800,000 people.

Continued care for parks and facilities- through reinvestment in facilities, amenity upgrades, and user experience development- cultivates access and sustainability for current and future generations.

New income sources are needed to upgrade facilities and increase staff so that OCPRC can provide accessible, high-quality parks and deliver experiences for its diverse park users.

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





Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection

Ottawa County parks system serves our growing community by acquiring high-quality natural resources and recreational land near protected property, greenways, and underserved areas.

Commitment to a calculated land acquisition and protection strategy enables 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. OCPRC recognizes the need for expansion of County parks as the desire for recreational and educational opportunities and demand for open, natural parks grows.

OCPRC seeks to collaborate with local conservation and land-based organizations to strengthen best practices in natural resource management. Further, 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.



The image featured above can be credited to Andrew Roszkowski.

Project Themes

During the planning process, a number of themes emerged that relate to the Strategic Initiatives and ongoing projects and/or new projects that would be undertaken to implement the goals of each Strategic Initiative. 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*. 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 Ottawa County Parks and Recreation leadership to:



Implementation Steps



1 Create Buy-In

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 OCPRC both internally and externally.

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. 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 strategic 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, OCPRC needs additional human and capital resources to support its Strategic Plan and accomplish its vision.

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation personnel have the dedication and expertise to contribute to the overall success of the parks. However, they are constrained by limited funding sources and inadequate staffing needed 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 strategic initiatives.

OCPRC will review realignment recommendations and staff feedback to consider organizational structure changes. As part of this process, 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

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.

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.

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

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.

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

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 Commission 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, Ottawa County Parks and Recreation 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 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 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.

OCPRC should consider immediate implementation of position realignment recommendations. Creation of new positions may need to wait until residents approve an increased mill rate. However, the recommendation types- realignment and net new positions- are mission crucial to successful Plan implementation.

In consideration with the Strategic Plan, 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 responsible for different facets of Strategic Plan implementation.

OCPRC Divisions:	Connectivity	Community Engagement	Conservation	Organizational Quality	Strategic Land Acquisition & Protection
Community Engagement	X	X			
Natural Resource Management	X		X	X	X
Park Planning & Development			X	X	X
Fund Development & Gifts		X		X	X
Park Maintenance & Operations		X	X	X	
Business Operations		X		X	
Support Organizations	X	X	X		X

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 Operations (new division), and Natural Resource Management divisions may be updating or realigning internal documents and can use the framework developed during this for their own plans.

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

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

² Ottawa County, Population and Growth Rates in Ottawa County (accessed March 14, 2024).
https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/Planning/pdf/Databooks/Population_Estimates.pdf

³ Ottawa County, Ten Largest Counties in Michigan 2022 (accessed March 14, 2024).
https://www.miottawa.org/Departments/Planning/pdf/Databooks/Estimates_MichiganTop10.pdf

⁴ 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 H:** Capital Investment Analysis





Appendix A: 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.

5,621 Ottawa County residents and visitors responded to the Public Survey.

6 engagement sessions were hosted by Crowe.

57 stakeholders provided feedback via the Stakeholder Survey.

51 individuals participated in the engagement sessions.

ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS

Crowe hosted **six** engagement sessions and invited the following:

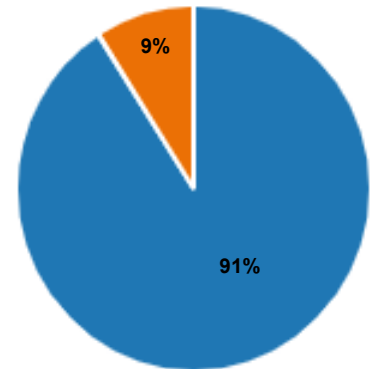
- Ottawa County Parks Staff
- Ottawa County Parks Leadership
- Partner Organizations
- Support Organizations
- Local Units of Government
- Parks Commission / Advisory Committee

Survey Observations

PARTICIPANTS

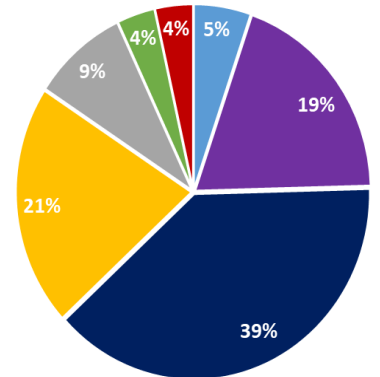
Public Survey Participants

Ottawa County Residents



Stakeholder Survey Participants

- Other
- OCP Staff
- Local Government Unit / Governemnt Entity
- School / School District
- Not-for-profit Organization
- Land Mangers / Conservation Organizaiton
- Recreational-based Organization / Club



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:
53%

Stakeholders:
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 style="list-style-type: none">• Limited handicap parking• Beaches lack accessible walkways• Desire for more inclusive playgrounds
Parks Growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purchase waterfront properties, especially Grand River and Lake Michigan• More parks in the Northeast area of the County
Environmental Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to preserve green spaces• Keep Ottawa Dunes and newly acquired land natural and undeveloped• Continue prioritizing habitat preservation
User Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More swimming areas, especially in eastern Ottawa County• More water-based activities and access (e.g., kayak and paddle board launches)• Expanded hiking (paved and non-paved) and biking trails
Quality of Parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintain and improve current parks• Need clean and functioning restrooms• Add more trash cans
Community Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inform community of OCPRC progress (e.g., communicate updated map annually)• Expand volunteer programming
Programming	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Weekend programming• Program offerings for all ages – young and old• Free classes• Overnight experiences

Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

 Parks Leadership	 Parks Staff	 Partner Organizations	 Local Government Units	 Support Organizations	 Parks Commission & Advisory Committee
Date: 2/7/2024 Time: 9:00 – 10:00 a.m.	Date: 2/7/2024 Time: 10:30 – 11:30 a.m.	Date: 3/7/2024 Time: 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Date: 3/7/2024 Time: 4:00 – 5:00 p.m.	Date: 3/8/2024 Time: 10:00 – 11:00 a.m.	Date: 3/8/2024 Time: 1:00 – 2:00 .m.
1	2	3	4	5	6

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.
7	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.)
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.).
10*	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?
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

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission – Community Benefits Survey Report – **Draft for Review**

July 2024





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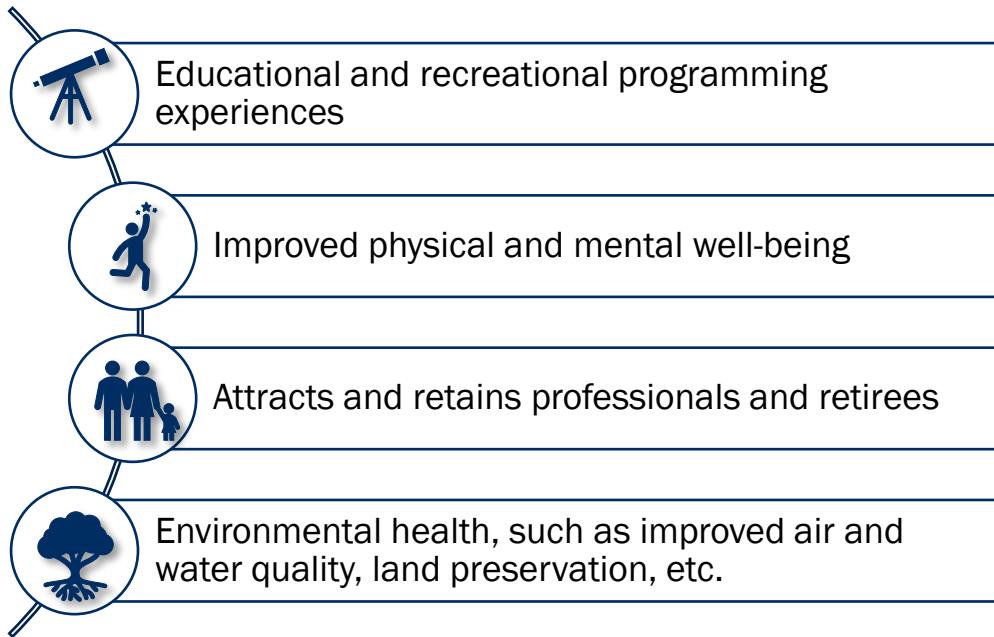
Executive Summary

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 have generated the following:

\$6.4 million	in annual economic activity resulting from Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission’s (OCPRC) budgetary spending
\$17.6 million	in total temporary benefits due to spending on ongoing large-scale construction projects (from 2018-2024)
\$26.8 million	in current and expected annual tourism spending
\$41.5 million	in additional assessed value to residential properties near select parks
1,082 jobs	in both permanent and temporary supported employment added

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





Overview

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission (OCPRC) has 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”).

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 since then, the County has maintained around 10% growth every decade. Throughout this time, OCPRC has made an effort to protect the land and natural resources and to provide expanded recreational opportunities. OCPRC has expanded from nine parks and 416 acres to over 40 parks and 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”) will provide 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. The 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 contribute significantly to the economy by spending over \$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, which leads to higher property taxes and thus, additional County tax revenue. For the Parks included in the analysis, the proximity of Parks added nearly \$41.5 million in additional assessed value to residential properties and over \$1 million in annual property taxes. This increase in property values reflects the premium which residents place on 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		
Benefit Category	Exhibit	Total
Ongoing Economic Benefits from Parks Budget		
Current OCPRC Annual Budget Impacts (based on 2024 Budget)	Ex. 2.1	\$ 6,218,458
Additional Ottawa Sands Budget Impacts (based on 65% capacity estimate)	Ex. 2.2	171,381
Temporary Economic Benefits from Parks Construction		
Grand River Greenway Construction Impacts	Ex. 2.3	7,255,865
Ottawa Sands Construction Impacts	Ex. 2.4	10,365,128
Ongoing Tourism Benefits		
Current Annual Tourist Spending (based on 2023 Placer data)	Ex. 3.1	24,204,711
Additional Annual Tourist Spending Post-Completion of Ottawa Sands Project	Ex. 3.2	1,972,310
Additional Annual Tourist Spending Post-Completion of Grand River Greenway Projects	Ex. 3.3	612,601
Residential Property Value Benefits (1)		
Additional Residential Assessed Value	Ex. 4.2	41,469,690
Additional Annual Residential Property Taxes	Ex. 4.3	1,029,297

(1) 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		
Grand River Greenway Construction Supported Employment	Ex. 2.3	57
Ottawa Sands Construction Supported Employment	Ex. 2.4	77
Total Temporary Employment Supported		134

Note: Values are rounded to nearest whole number.

Exhibit 1.3: Monetary Benefits vs Spending	
Input / Output Category	Amount (\$)
Spending (1)	
Current OCPRC Annual Budget (2024 Budget)	\$ 6,019,154
Additional Ottawa Sands Budget (based on 65% capacity estimate)	175,991
Total Grand River Greenway Construction Spend (of included Projects)	5,120,801
Total Ottawa Sands Construction Spend (of included Projects)	7,353,991
Total Spending	\$ 18,669,937
Monetary Benefits	
Total Ongoing Economic Benefits from Parks Budget	\$ 6,389,839
Total Temporary Economic Benefits from Parks Construction	17,620,993
Total Current and Expected Ongoing Tourism Benefits	26,789,622
Total Monetary Benefits	\$ 50,800,454
Total Monetary Benefit per Dollar Spent	\$ 2.72

Note: The table above should only be interpreted as a way to contextualize the monetary benefits calculated within this Report compared to the spending inputs used to prepare said calculations. The table is not a projection and does not suggest that every additional dollar spent in the future will return the same result.

(1) See 'Supplemental - Project Inputs, Outputs, and Assumptions' table.

Exhibit 1.4: Park Monetary Benefits vs Ottawa County Total Tourism Spending	
	Amount (\$)
<u>Current Park Tourist Spending vs County Total Tourist Spending</u>	
Current Park Annual Tourist Spending (based on 2023 Placer data)	\$ 24,204,711
Divided by: Ottawa County Total Annual Tourism Spending (1)	<u>425,650,648</u>
Current Park Tourist Spending as % of County Tourist Spending	<u>5.7%</u>
<u>Total Park Tourism Spending vs County Total Tourist Spending (2)</u>	
Total Park Current and Expected Tourism Benefits	26,789,622
Divided by: Ottawa County Total Annual Tourism Spending (1)	<u>425,650,648</u>
Total Expected Park Tourist Spending as % of County Tourist Spending	<u>6.3%</u>
<u>Total Park Monetary Benefits vs County Total Tourist Spending (3)</u>	
Total Park Monetary Benefits	50,800,454
Divided by: Ottawa County Total Annual Tourism Spending (1)	<u>425,650,648</u>
Total Park Monetary Benefits as % of County Tourist Spending	<u>11.9%</u>

Note: The table above should only be interpreted as a way to contextualize the monetary benefits calculated within this Report compared to the total tourism spending in the County (representative of the County's tourism industry). The percentages calculated above are solely meant to demonstrate the scale of the Parks benefits compared to the County's tourism industry. The above results are not projections.

- (1) Based on Pure Michigan's 2022 'Tourism Economic Impact' reports, Ottawa County data.
- (2) Result should only be interpreted as a demonstration of the scale of the Park's Total Tourism Monetary Benefits (both current and expected) in comparison to the most currently available County-wide tourism sector data. Includes both Current and Expected tourism spending generated by Parks, with the expected spending based on a 4-to-5-year future outlook of stabilized tourist visits.
- (3) Result should only be interpreted as a demonstration of the scale of the Park's Total Monetary Benefits (both current and expected) in comparison to the most currently available County-wide tourism sector data. Total Park Monetary Benefits impact sectors beyond just the tourism-sector. Does not indicate that 11.9% of County Tourism spending is due to Parks - rather that the Total Park Monetary Benefits are similar in scale to 11.9% of total County tourism spending.

2. Community Economic Benefits from Parks Spending

The economic benefits to the County from Parks spending are multifaceted, with both the annual budget and improvement-related spending playing pivotal roles in the economy of these communities. The allocation of funds for the annual operation and maintenance of the Parks ensures a steady flow of money into the local economy as it covers expenses ranging from staff salaries to the purchase of goods and services required for park maintenance, operations, and management.

Construction spending, on the other hand, 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

IMPLAN modeling data and software was utilized 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
- **Induced:** Effects in the region stemming from household spending of income after removal of taxes, savings, and commuters

Industry multipliers from IMPLAN were used to show the effect of the OCPRC and Ottawa Sands annual budget expenditures and the Grand River Greenway and Ottawa Sands construction projects that will generate economic activity both in terms of 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 tables.

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: Estimated Ottawa County Parks 2024 Budget Impact				
Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value 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
	<u>54.25</u>	<u>\$ 3,715,048.77</u>	<u>\$ 5,002,667.33</u>	<u>\$ 6,218,457.88</u>

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: Estimated Ottawa Sands Budget Impact (65% Capacity)				
Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value 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	29,369.18
	<u>1.44</u>	<u>\$ 96,925.72</u>	<u>\$ 131,592.17</u>	<u>\$ 171,380.54</u>

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.

Exhibit 2.3: Grand River Greenway Construction Impact (1)				
Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value 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
	<u>57.22</u>	<u>\$ 3,383,591.55</u>	<u>\$ 3,984,614.43</u>	<u>\$ 7,255,864.59</u>

(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 supported over 77 temporary jobs and generated \$10.3 million in economic activity within the County in 2024.

Exhibit 2.4: Ottawa Sands Construction Impact (1)				
Impact	Employment	Labor Income	Value Added	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
	<u>77.43</u>	<u>\$ 4,593,848.99</u>	<u>\$ 5,660,942.94</u>	<u>\$ 10,365,127.73</u>

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

3. Community Tourism Benefits

The Parks are also a significant tourist attraction for the community, drawing hundreds of thousands of non-residents and their spending to the County each year. The Parks attract a diverse range of tourists interested in the County’s natural beauty and the wide variety of outdoor activities available. 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	\$ 24,204,711

- (1) Based on 2023 Placer 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 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 Spending Due to Completion of Ottawa Sands Project	
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 table includes the total estimated tourist visits following the completion of the Ottawa Sands Project. The Ottawa Sands ‘Current Annual Tourist Visits’ are not 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 Spending Due to Completion of Grand River Greenway Projects	
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 Recreation 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 table only includes the estimated increase 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 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 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.

Exhibit 3.4: Current Tourism-Supported Employment	
Current Annual Park Tourist Visits (1)	412,813
Times: Tourism-Supported Employment per Visit (2)	0.002164
Total Tourism-Supported Employment	893.33

- (1) Based on 2023 Placer 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.

Unlike typical city or town parks, many of the Parks are not located within established residential communities and more so serve as regional destinations. While these parks would be expected to generate a 'regional' impact on property values – and tend to drive a larger portion of tourism – it is challenging to derive their particular proximity-based property value benefit. To account for this, the below tables address the proximity-based property value benefits of a subset of the Parks, selected by OCPRC (see footnote (2)), located within more established residential communities.

Exhibit 4.1: Residential Proximity Premium Due to Proximity to Select Parks (1) (2)	
<i>Median Residential Parcel Assessed Value within "___" of Select Parks:</i>	
... 500 Feet	\$ 159,500
... Quarter Mile	132,200
Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (\$) (3)	<u>\$ 27,300</u>
Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (%) (3)	<u>17.12%</u>

- (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 Value Due to Proximity to Select Parks (1) (2)	
2023 Total Assessed Value of Residential Parcels within 500 Feet of Select Parks	
	\$ 242,229,500
Times: Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (%) (3)	<u>17.12%</u>
Total Premium Assessed Value (4)	<u>\$ 41,469,690</u>

- (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 Property Taxes Due to Proximity to Select Parks (1) (2)	
2023 Total Taxable Value of Residential Parcels within 500 Feet of Select Parks	\$ 169,401,948
Times: Proximity Premium within 500 Feet (%) (3)	17.12%
Premium Taxable Value (4)	<u>\$ 29,001,613</u>
Premium Annual Property Taxes (5)	<u>\$ 1,029,297</u>

- (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

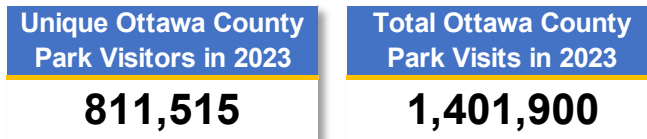
Beyond their economic and employment impacts, the Parks are at the core of community enrichment, offering a wealth of non-monetary benefits that enhance the quality of life for residents.

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 that cater to many demographics and interests, from the youngest children to seniors. 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 for the vast recreational and educational experiences offered. With an estimated population of slightly more than 300,000 residents,¹ the Parks are visited by nearly 90% of the County's residents at least once each year.² 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, indicating that not only do the vast majority of County residents use the parks, but that the Parks also welcome a significant number of tourists.



(1) Each 'visitor' is a unique person who visited a Park at least 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.

¹ US Census Bureau: Ottawa County Michigan 2023. (n.d.)
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/ottawacountymichigan/PST045223>

² Problolsky Research. (March 2024). Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission 2024 Scientific Survey, p. 6.

Ottawa County Parks - 2023 Visitation Data by Greenway			
Greenway	2023 Visitors	2023 Visits	% of Total 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	<u>10,800</u>	<u>20,400</u>	<u>1.5</u>
Total	<u>811,515</u>	<u>1,401,900</u>	<u>100.0 %</u>

Ottawa County Parks - 2023 Top 10 Most Visited Parks			
Park	2023 Visitors	2023 Visits	% of Total 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	<u>24,600</u>	<u>47,000</u>	<u>3.4</u>
Top 10 Total	<u>556,300</u>	<u>952,300</u>	<u>67.9 %</u>
All 27 Other Parks	<u>255,215</u>	<u>449,600</u>	<u>32.1 %</u>

Visitors also seek out the hundreds of programs offered at the Parks each year, attracting thousands of annual attendees. In 2023, almost 12,000 individuals participated in park programs. Dozens of school field trips/programs head to the Parks each year, providing 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 programs (including those held by nursing homes, assisted living homes, etc.) offer hundreds of seniors the chance to enjoy the outdoors at the Parks.

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
Total Programs	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 Parks - Notable Program Categories			
	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 also instilling a sense of awe and 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 while also 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.³ In addition to the physical health benefits, parks provide mental health benefits, especially during stressful times. Nearly 93% of U.S. adults say that the services and opportunities provided by their local park and

³ 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>

recreation department benefits their mental health.⁴ 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 has developed an interactive database estimating the annual health benefits of equitable park access.⁵ This tool was leveraged to calculate the reduction of health care expenses when residents live within a 10-minute walk to a park for the top five Ottawa County cities/townships. Based on the table below, Ottawa County would save more than \$7.1 million annually in health care expenses if the remaining residents in Holland, Allendale, Jenison, Grand Haven, and Hudsonville were within a 10-minute walk to a park.

Health Care Cost Savings of Equitable Park Access			
Community	Residents within 10-minute walk of a park	# of Residents Outside 10-Minute Walk to Park	Annual Health Care Expense Reduction if Remaining Residents Were Within 10-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.⁶ 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.

Many other reports have been prepared for other park systems which estimated the health care cost benefits generated due to physical activity in the 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.⁷ 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.⁸ Similarly, a report prepared for the Houston, Texas Parks Board in 2011 estimated the health benefits of the Bayou Greenways at \$13.9 million annually.⁹ These reports suggest that providing low or no cost access to parks, and the many physical activities available within said parks, can result in

⁴ *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/>.

⁵ 2023 NPRA the health benefits of parks. National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.) <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/research-papers/the-health-benefits-of-parks-and-their-economic-impacts/2023-npra-the-health-benefits-of-parks/>.

⁶ *County Health Rankings & Roadmaps*. University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute. (2024). <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/health-data/michigan/ottawa?year=2024>.

⁷ *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.

⁸ *The Economic Benefits of BREC Parks*. The Trust for Public Land. (August 2023). https://www.metroparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCMA_Economic_Benefits.pdf.

⁹ *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.

millions of dollars in annual health-related benefits for communities.

3. Community Talent Attraction / Retention Benefits

Parks investment provides impactful economic benefits measurable in dollars as detailed in previous sections. However, investment in parks also provides 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 well-being 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.

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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹ 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

The success of the Parks system relies strongly on the health of the land, natural resources, and various habitats. Conservation efforts must be prioritized in order 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 enriching 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.¹²

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.¹³

OCPRC continues to be stewards of the land and improve and protect the environmental health of the County and its resources. OCPRC has adopted a natural systems philosophy, which prioritizes interconnected networks of waterways, wetlands, woodlands, wildlife habitats, and other natural species

¹⁰ Lewis, M. (2003, April). *How cities use parks for economic development*. American Planning Association. <https://www.planning.org/publications/document/9148668/>.

¹¹ October 2023 Park Pulse, *Home is where a park is*. National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/home-is-where-a-park-is/>

¹² 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/>

¹³ Park Pulse, *Taking action for sustainability*. National Recreation and Park Association. (n.d.). <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/taking-action-for-sustainability/>

by maintaining natural, ecological processes and sustaining air and water resources.¹⁴ 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 have 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.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶

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.¹⁷ Parks have been shown to help (i) reduce stormwater runoff and (ii) reduce air pollution.¹⁸ 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 benefits²⁰. 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 annually²¹. 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.

¹⁴ OCPRC Business Plan and Goals, Idema Explorers Camp at Ottawa Sands Park, p. 12.

¹⁵ OCPRC Grand River Greenway Project Update Winter 2024, p. 5.

¹⁶ OCPRC Grand River Greenway Project Update Winter 2024, p. 18.

¹⁷ *Why City Parks Matter*. City Parks Alliance. (n.d.) <https://cityparksalliance.org/about-us/why-city-parks-matter/>.

¹⁸ *Green Infrastructure in Parks: A Guide to Collaboration, Funding, and Community Engagement*. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. (June 2017) https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2017-05/documents/gi_parksplaybook_2017-05-01_508.pdf.

¹⁹ *Air Quality Effects of Urban Trees and Parks*. Nowak, David and Heisler, Gordon. (2010) <https://www.nrupa.org/globalassets/research/nowak-heisler-summary.pdf>.

²⁰ *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.

²¹ *The Economic Benefits of BREC Parks*. The Trust for Public Land. (August 2023). https://www.metroparks.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/HCMA_Economic_Benefits.pdf.

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 tables. 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 table summarized 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, Outputs, and Assumptions		
Data Element	Amount	Source
Ottawa County Park 2024 Expenditure Budget	\$ 6,019,154.31	OCPRC
Ottawa Sands Expenditure Budget (65% occupancy)	175,991.00	OCPRC
Grand River Greenway Projects		
M-231 Connector	1,219,295.39	OCPRC
Grand Valley State University & Grand Ravines Connector (less easement acquisition)	397,553.09	OCPRC
Bend Area Connector	856,138.35	OCPRC
Jenison Mill Trail	1,370,869.91	OCPRC
Grand Ravines & Grand River Park (less easement acquisition)	1,276,944.16	OCPRC
Ottawa Sands Project		
Wetland Resotoration (Habitat)	441,714.00	OCPRC
Wetland Resotoration (Shoreline)	99,963.00	OCPRC
Lake Loop	788,314.25	OCPRC
Phase 1 Implementation - Treehouse	1,667,000.00	OCPRC
Phase I Implemenation - Yurt Campground	3,847,000.00	OCPRC
Park Restroom Building	510,000.00	OCPRC
Time Period of Analysis	2018-2024	OCPRC
Ottawa County Michigan Geographic Region	2022 multiplier data	IMPLAN
Tourism Impacts		
Ottawa County Parks, Annual Tourist Visits for Year	2023 visitation data	OCPRC; Placer.AI
Ottawa Couty Parks, % of Visits with Post-Visit Spending Indicators for Year	2023 visitation data	OCPRC; Placer.AI
2022 Average Spend per Visit, West Michigan Region	\$ 162.33	Pure Michigan
2022 Average Employment-Supported per Visit, West Michigan Region	0.002164	Pure Michigan
Property Impacts		
"Select Parks" Included in Analysis	5 Parks Selected	OCPRC
County Parcel Records for Year	2023 Parcel Data	OCPRC
List of Parcels Within Given Distance to Select Parks (1/4 Mile; 500 Feet) for Year	2023 Parcel Data	OCPRC



Appendix C: Scientific Survey Executive Summary

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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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

The sample was secured through voter files originally compiled by the Elections Division of the Ottawa County Clerk/Register of Deeds Office and enhanced with consumer data. We called, emailed, and texted voters and non-voters. We matched the demographics of Ottawa County voters and non-voters.

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.

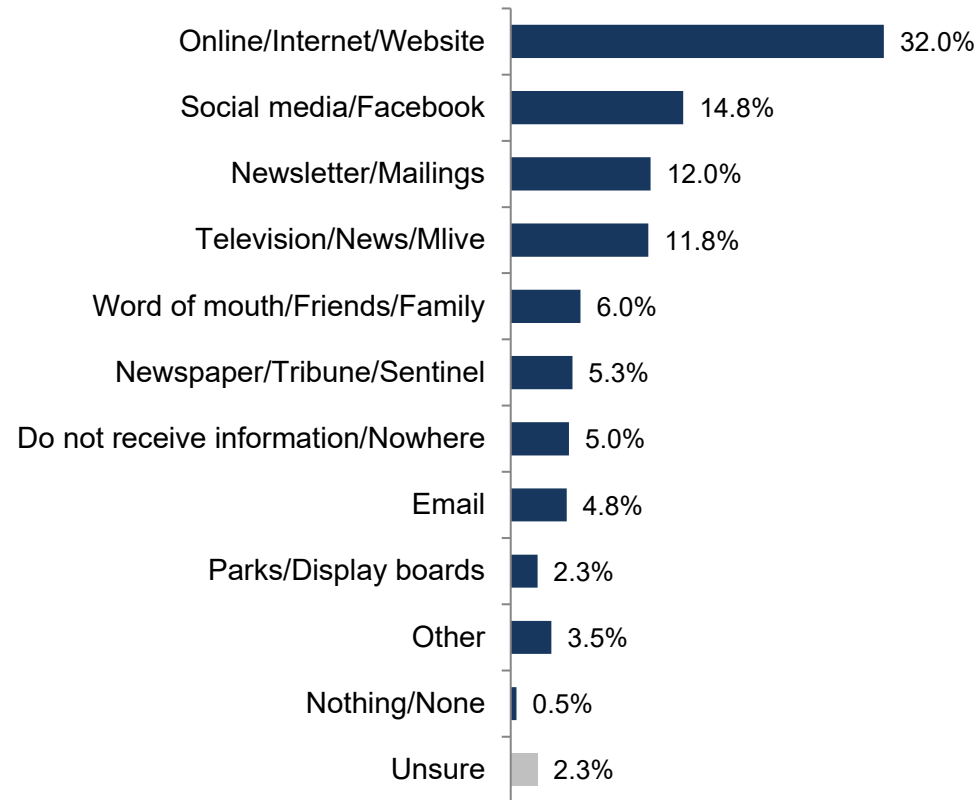
Probolsky Research is a Latina- and woman-owned market and opinion research firm with corporate, election, government, and non-profit clients.

**Due to rounding, totals shown on charts may not add up to 100%*



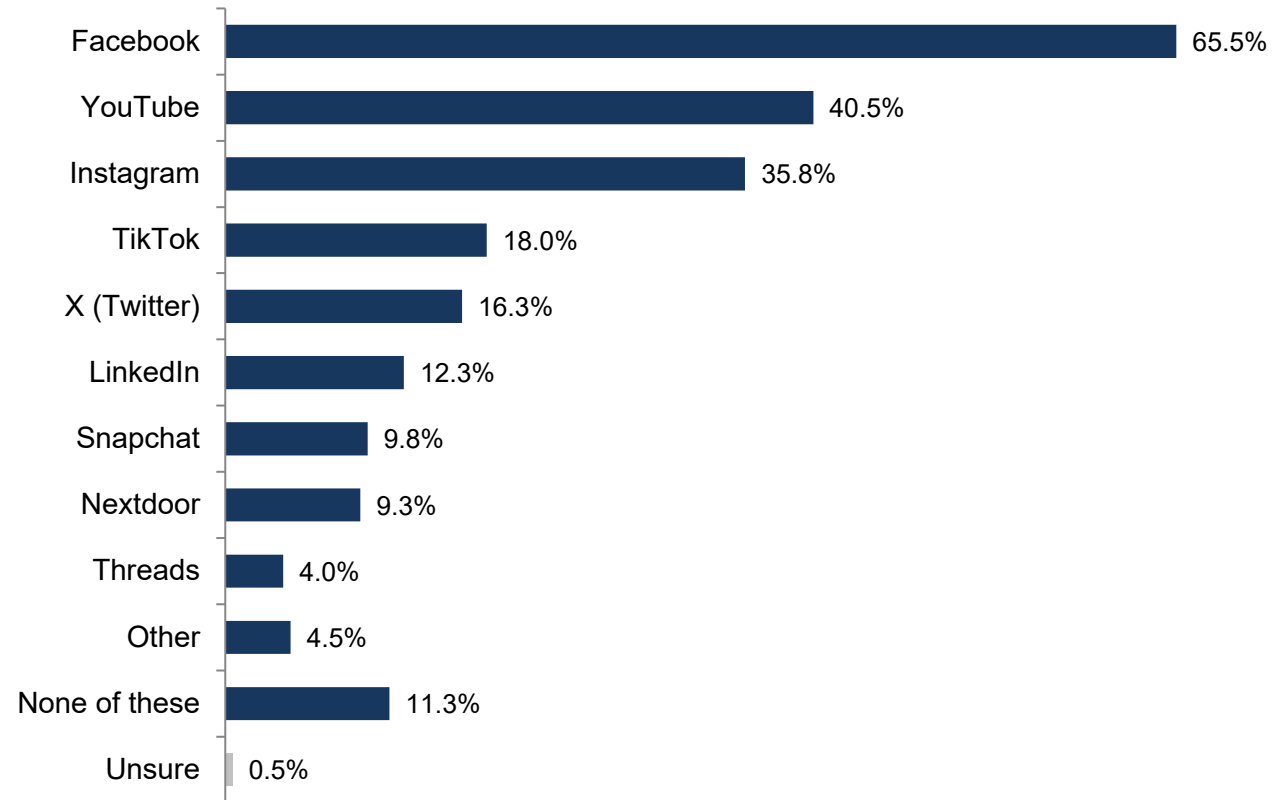
32% get most of their information about Ottawa County Parks online

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



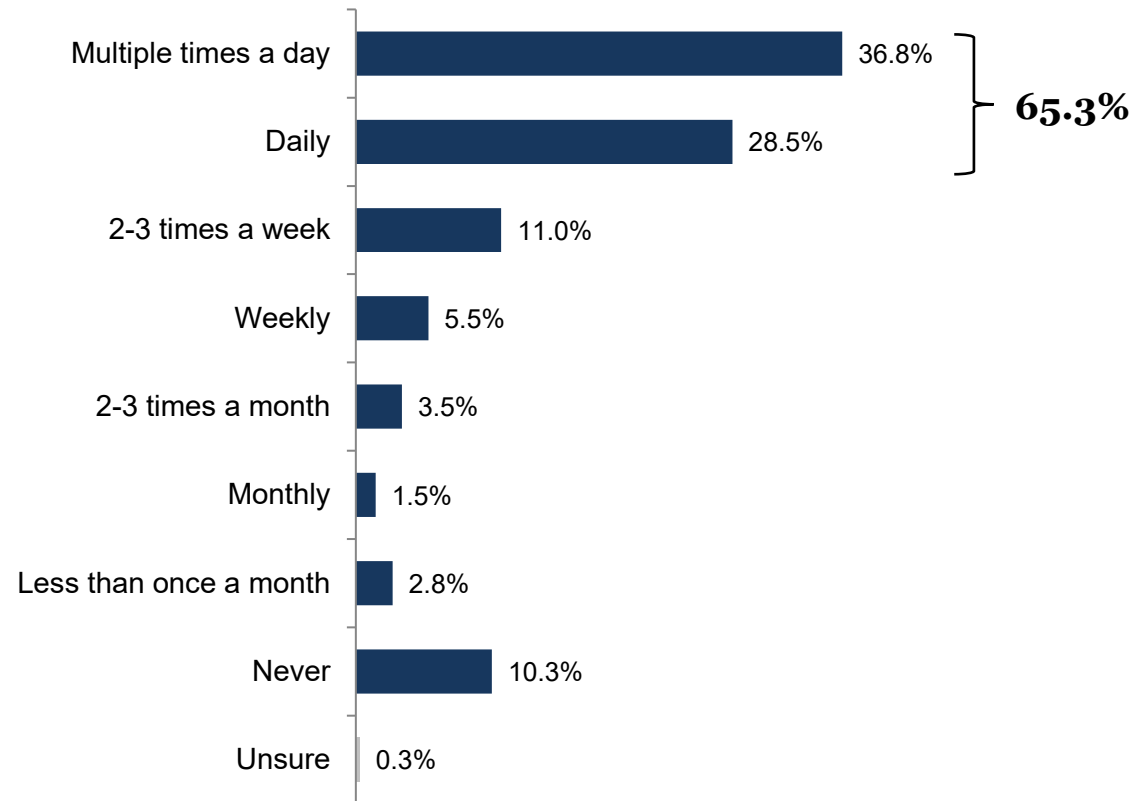
66% use Facebook regularly

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



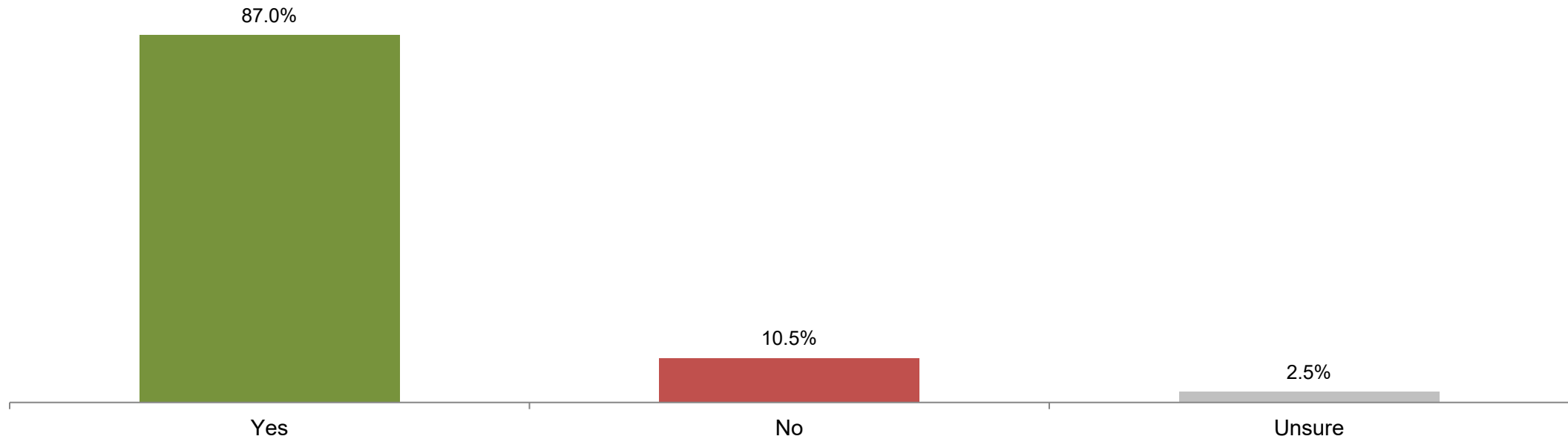
65% use social media apps or websites at least once a day

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



87% have visited Ottawa County parks or open spaces in the past year

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

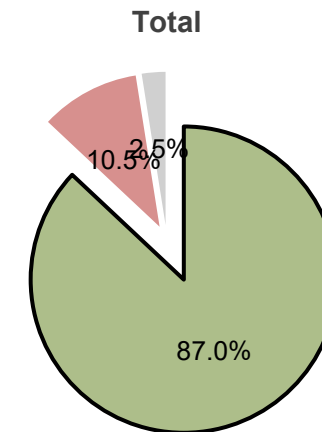
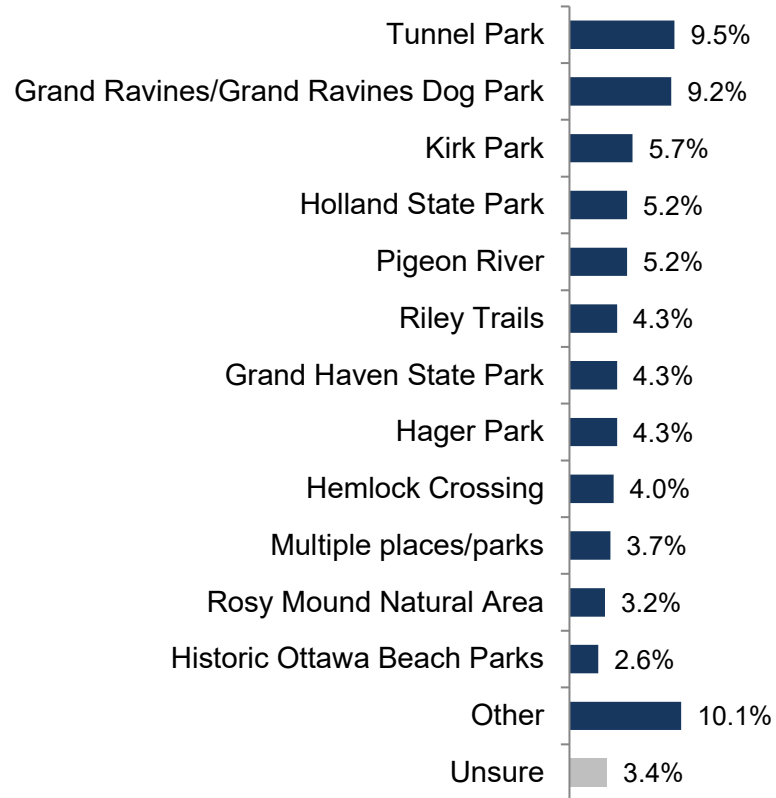


Among those who visited a park or open space in Ottawa County within the past year, 10% visited Tunnel Park

Question 5: What is the name of the park(s) or open space(s) you visited in Ottawa County?

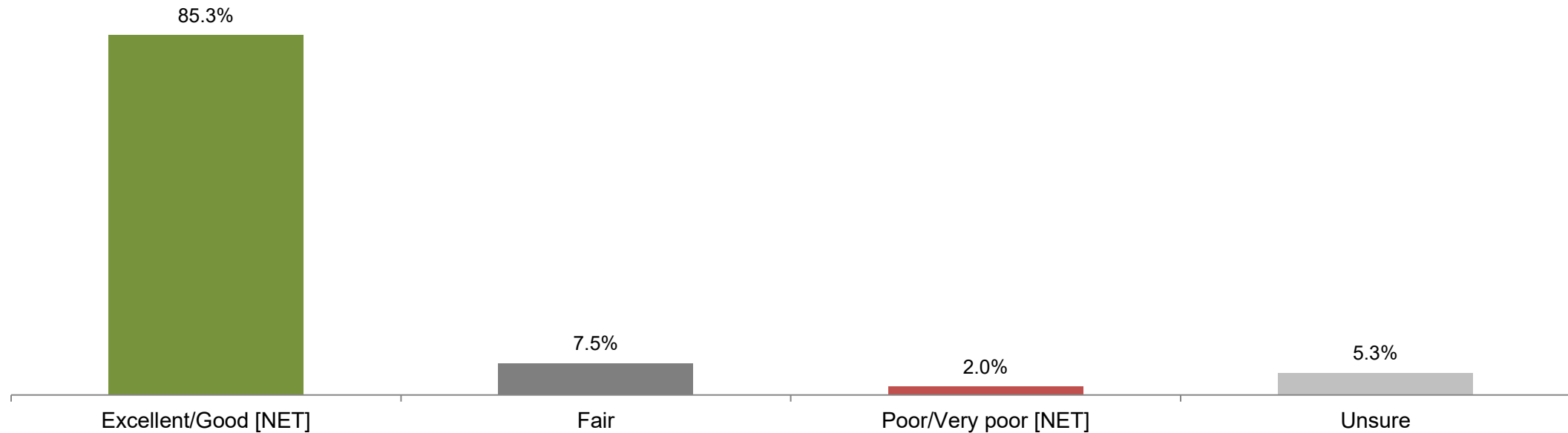
[IF ANSWERED 'YES' TO Q4]

[OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]



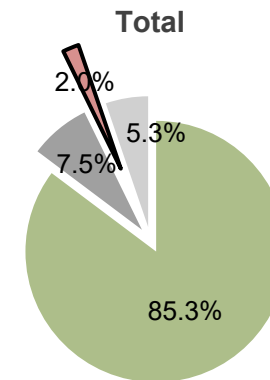
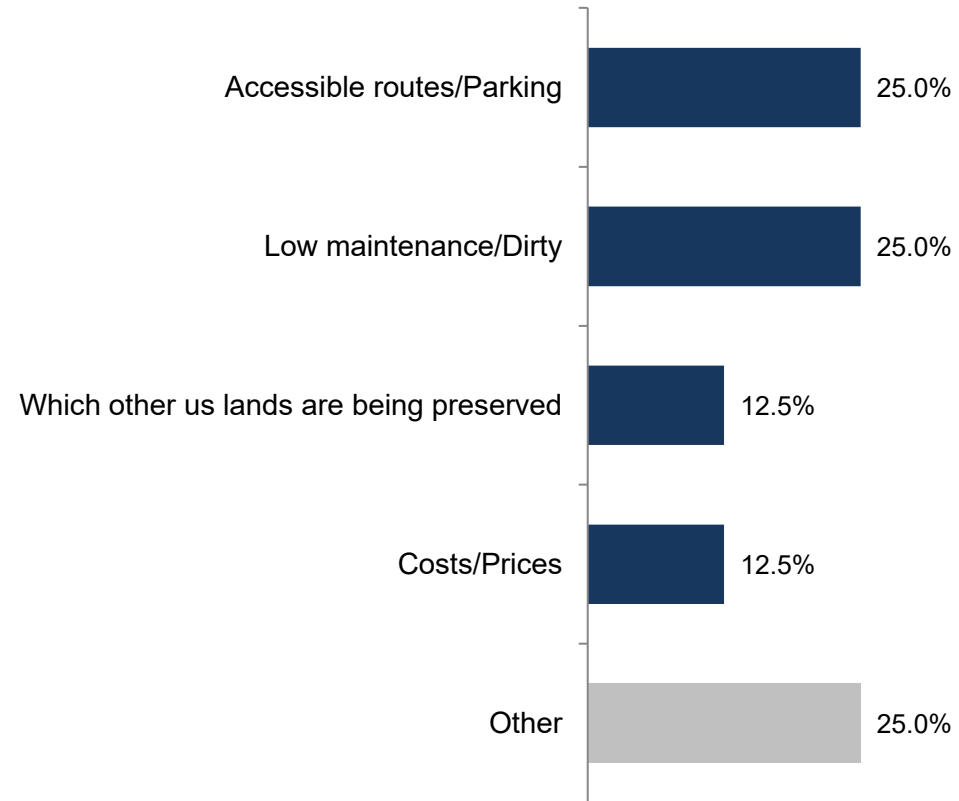
85% rate the job being done by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission as excellent/good

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?



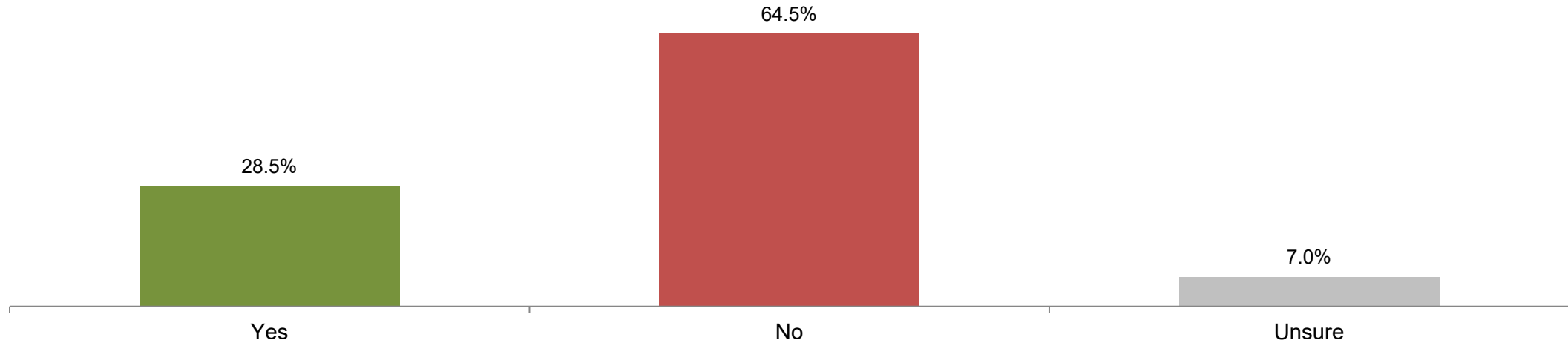
Among those rating the job being done by the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission as poor/very poor, half cite accessibility or maintenance issues

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]



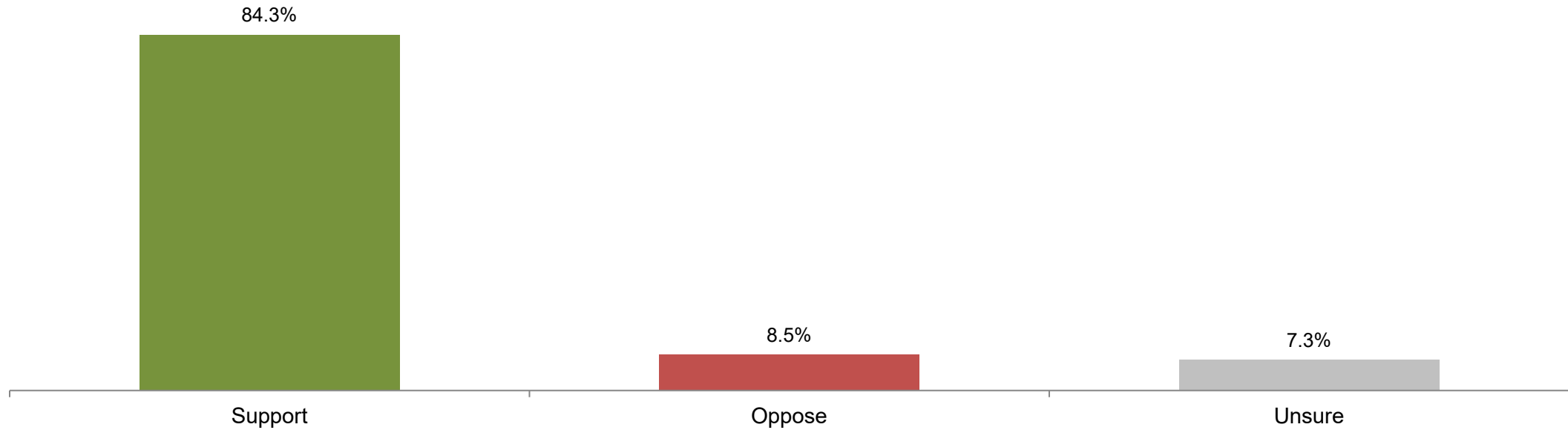
65% were not aware that there is currently a special millage dedicated specifically to help fund Ottawa County parks

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?



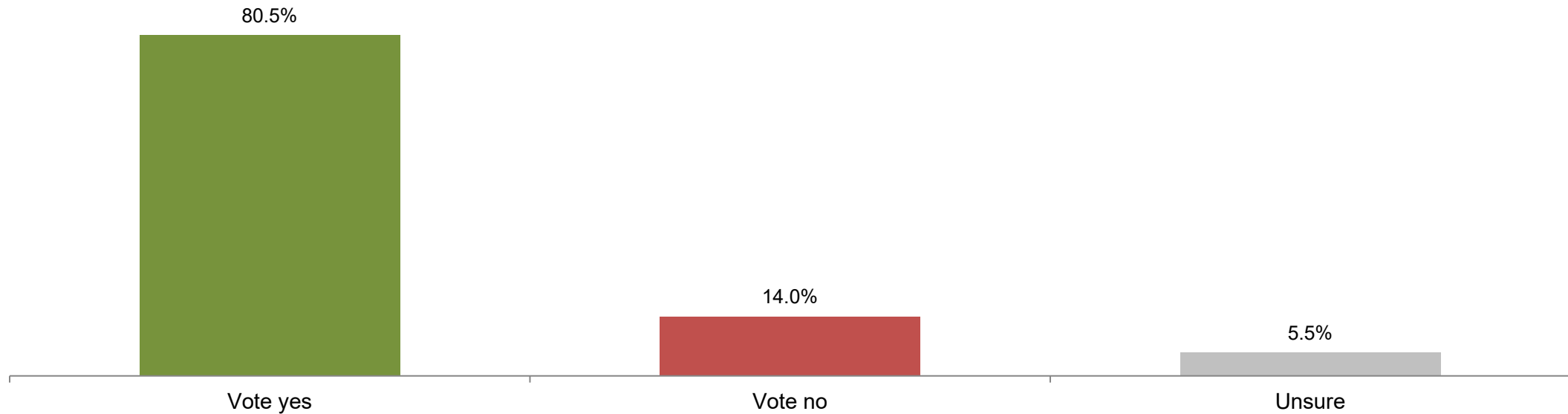
84% support the current parks millage

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?



Initial vote: 81% vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation 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?

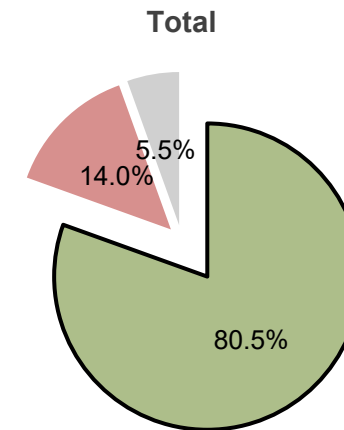
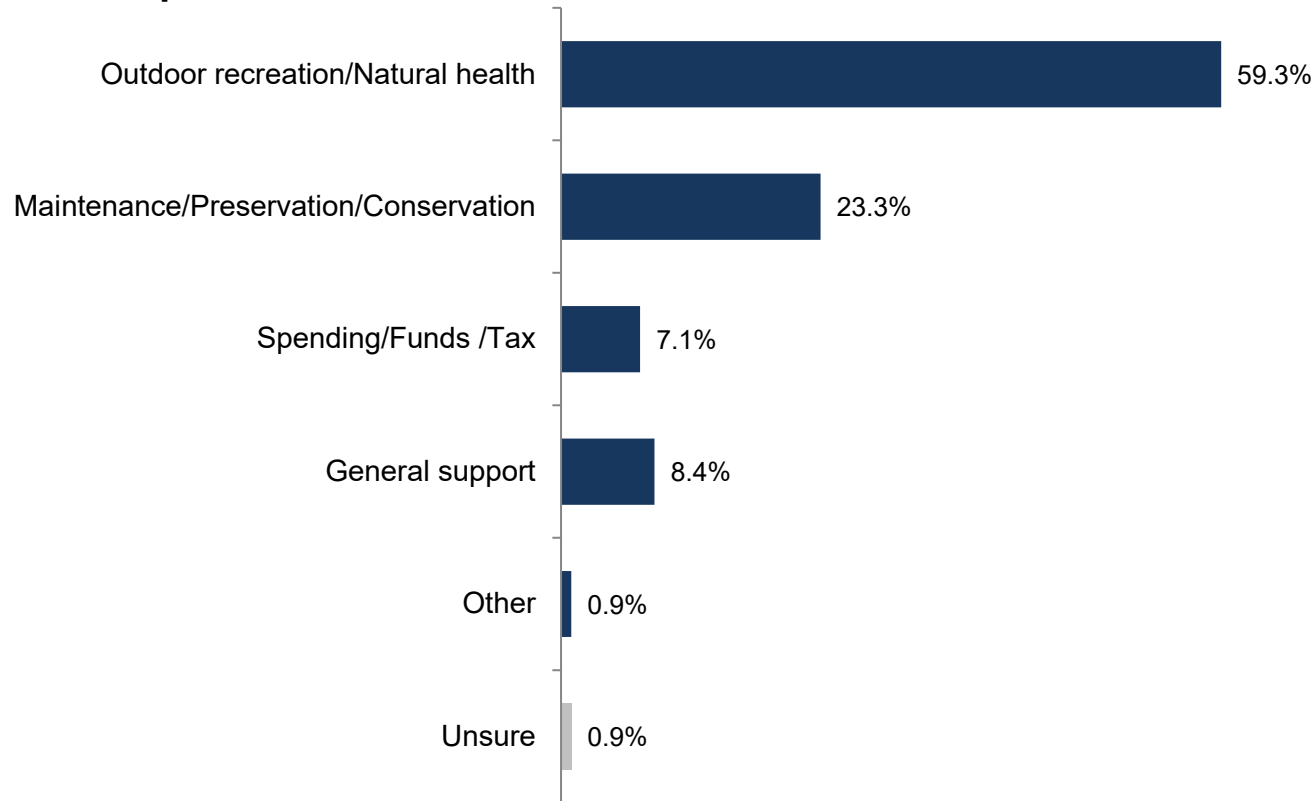


Among those who would vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage, 59% cite the need for outdoor recreation

Question 11: Why would you vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage?

[IF ANSWERED 'VOTE YES' TO Q10]

[OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]

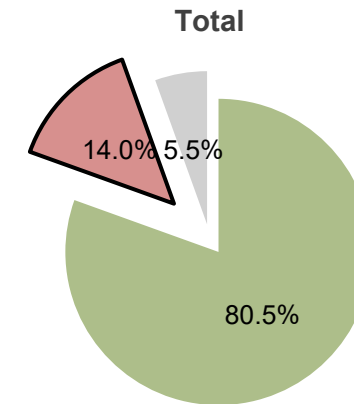
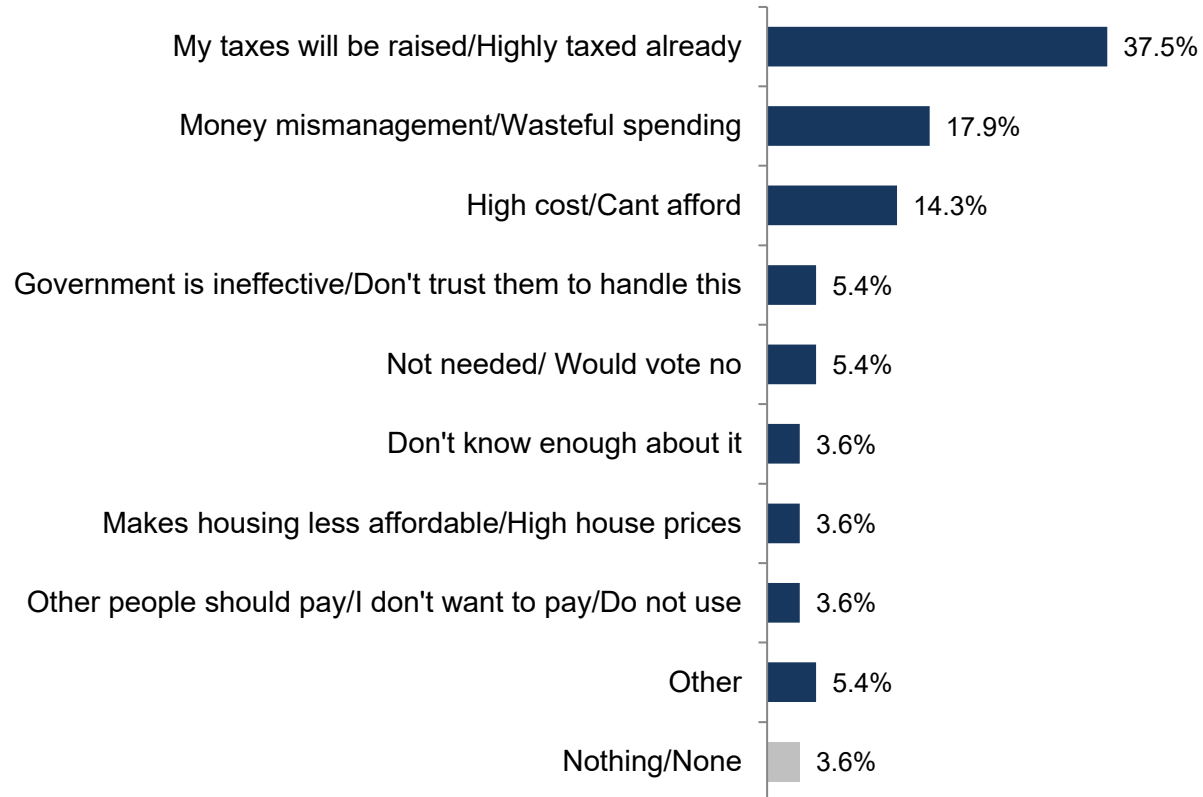


Among those who would vote no to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage, 38% cite tax concerns

Question 12: Why would you vote no to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage?

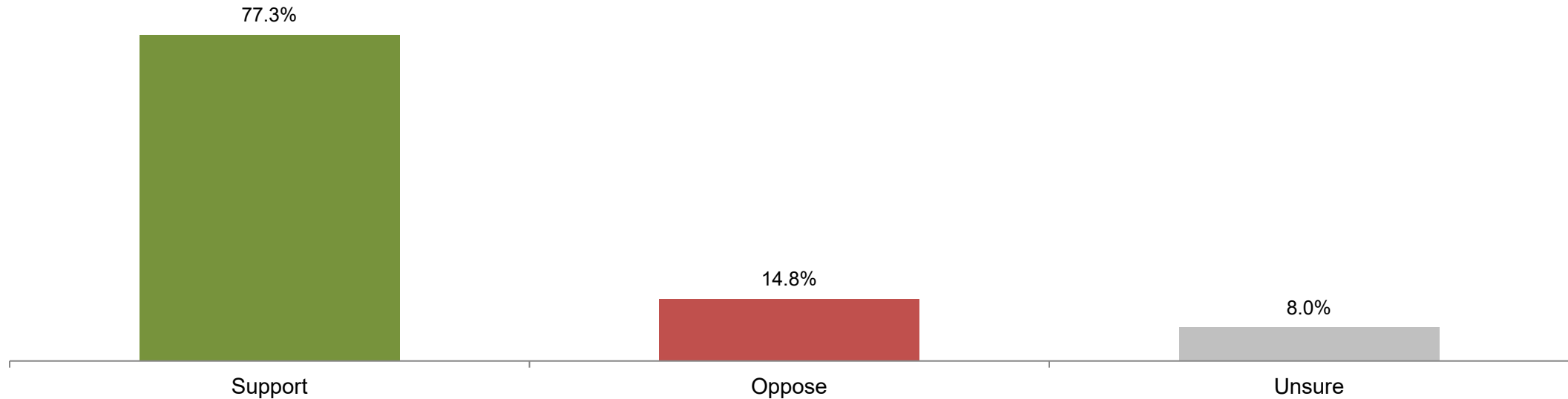
[IF ANSWERED 'VOTE NO' TO Q10]

[OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]



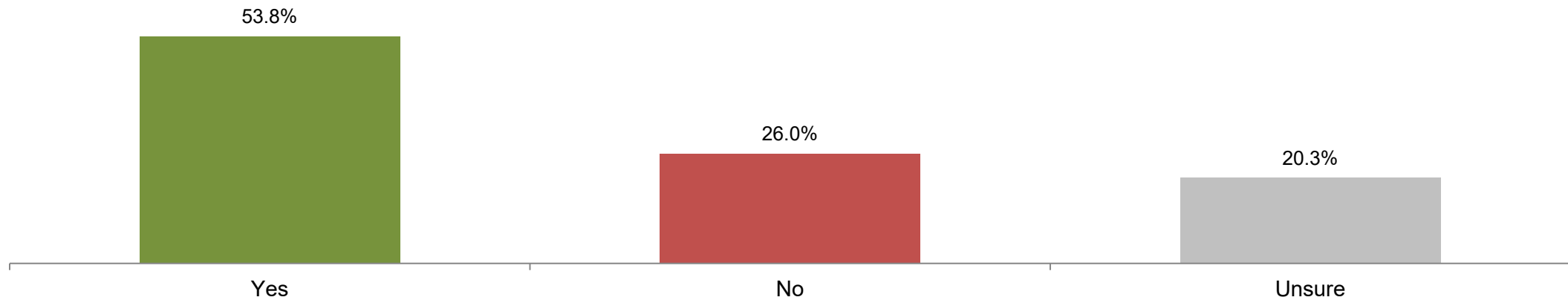
77% support an increased millage focused on the protection and management of the County's most sensitive natural resources

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?



54% support a cost recovery initiative to fund the operations and maintenance of special facilities

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?

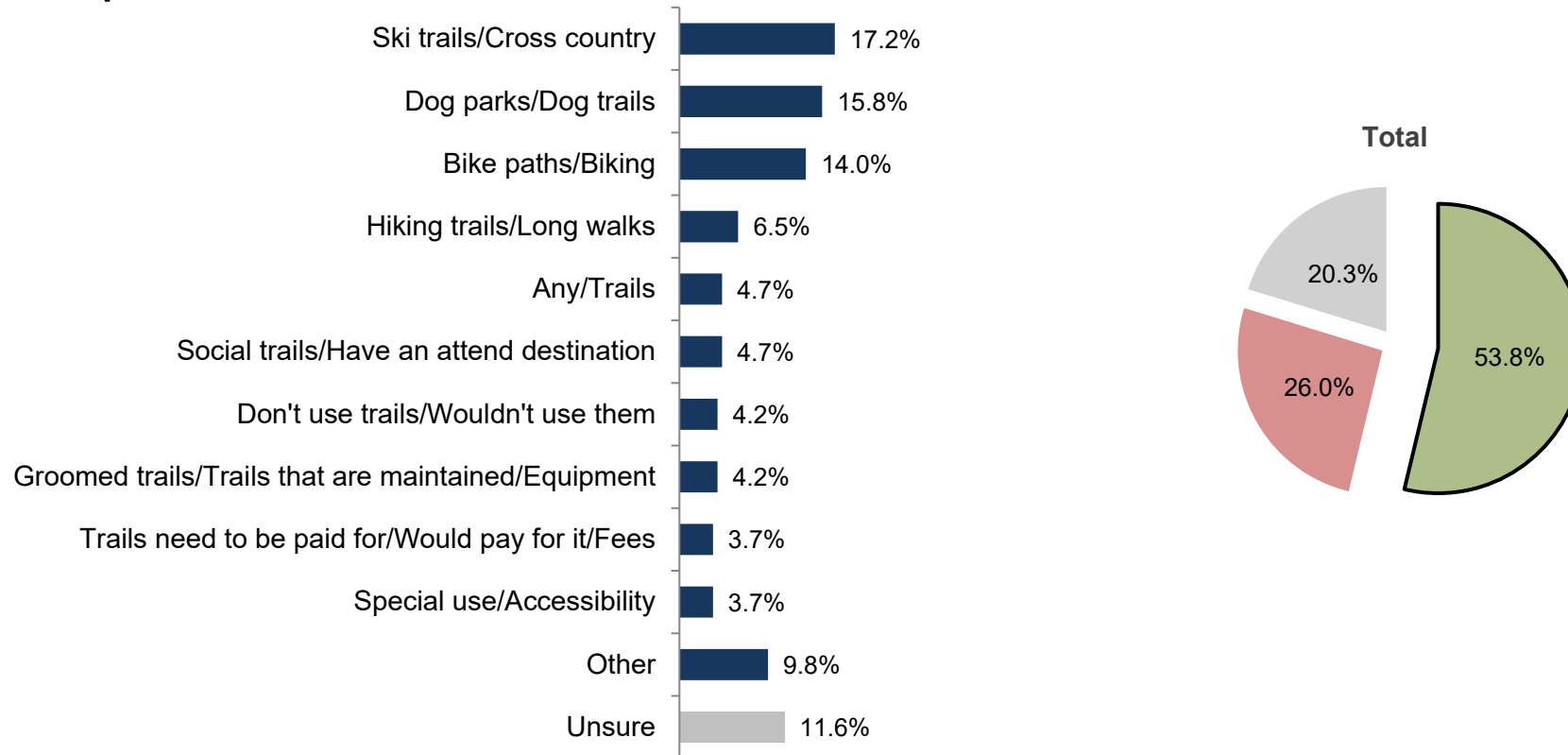


Among those who support a cost recovery initiative, 17% would consider paying a user fee to help fund ski maintenance/operations costs

Question 15: What type of trail/facility would you consider paying a user fee to help cover the operations and maintenance costs?

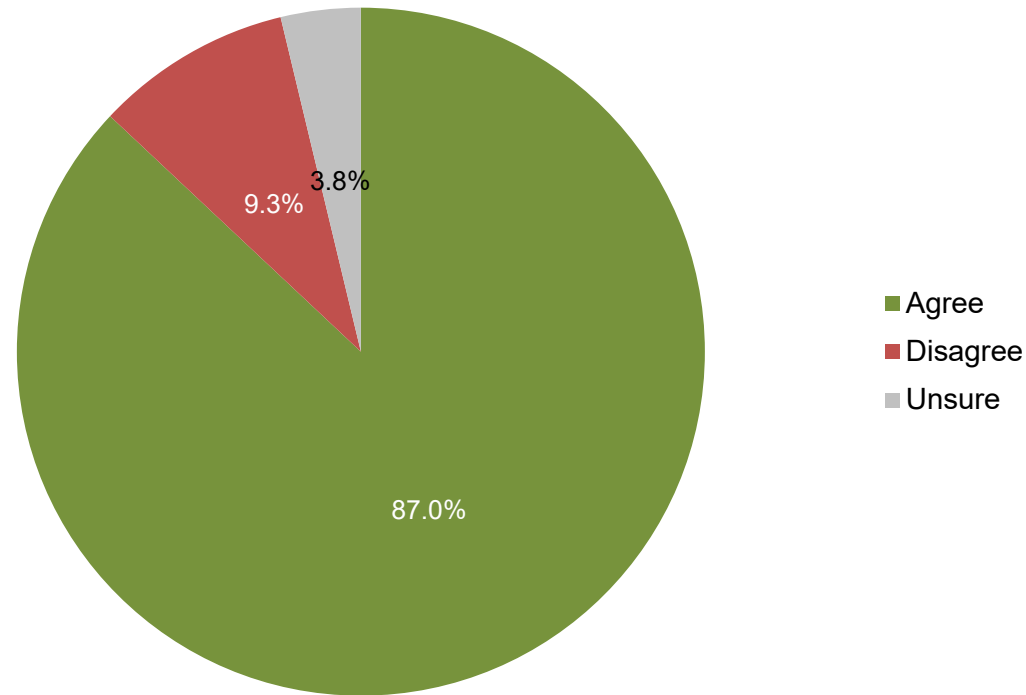
[[IF ANSWERED 'YES' TO Q14]

[OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]

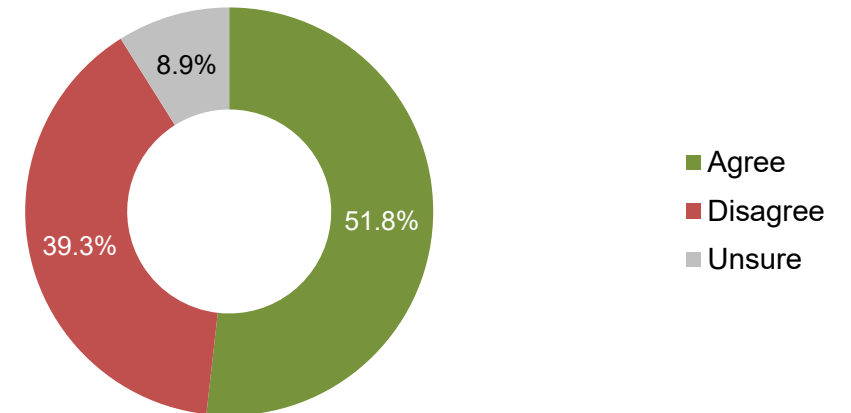


87% agree that the Parks Commission should protect additional land and natural spaces

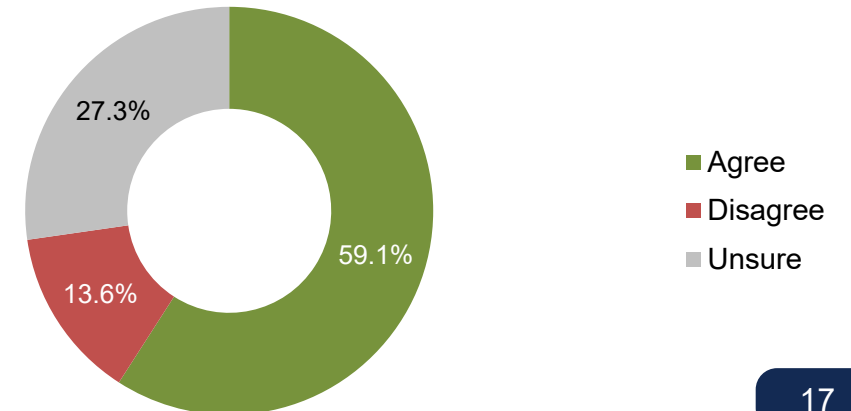
Question 16: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should protect additional land and natural spaces for conservation of key natural features, habitat, natural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



Among those who initially voted “no”

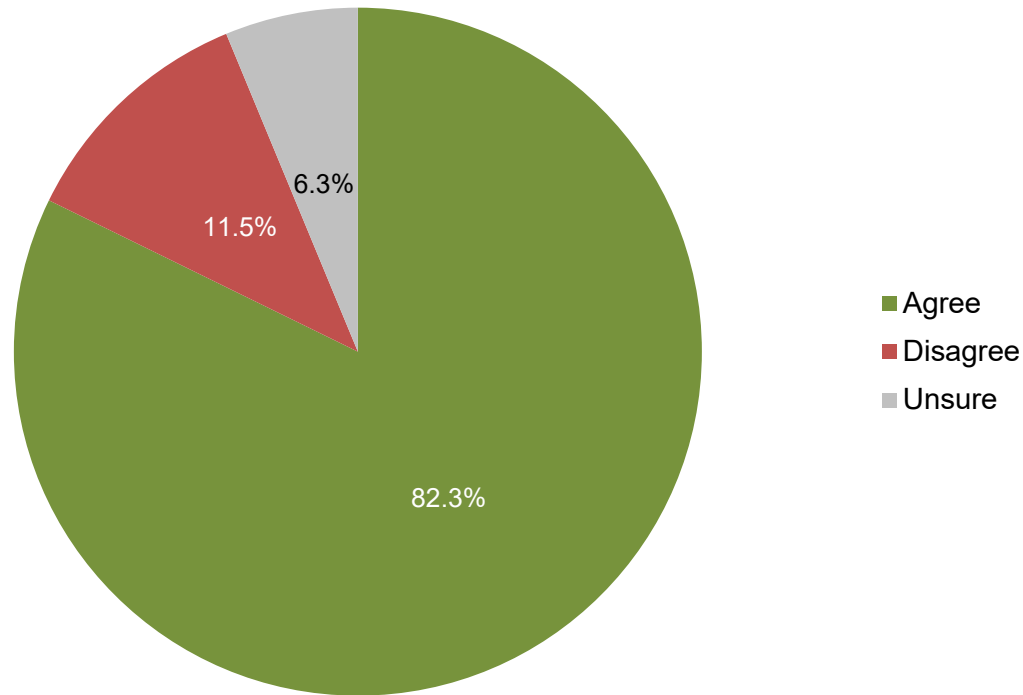


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

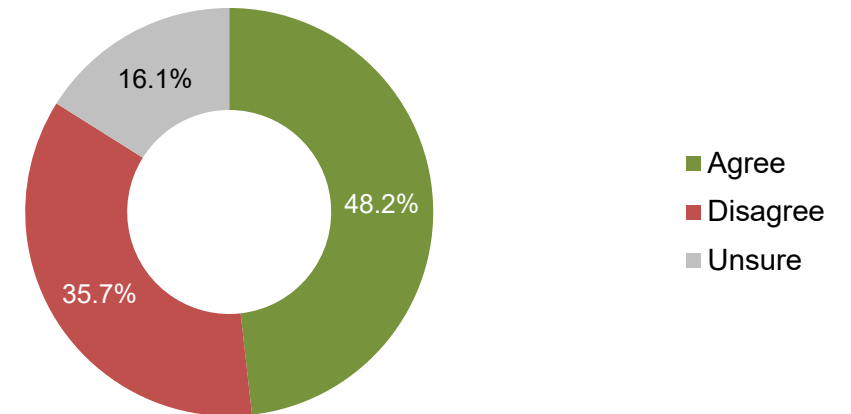


82% agree that the Parks Commission should provide leadership in completing a County-wide regional multi-use trail system

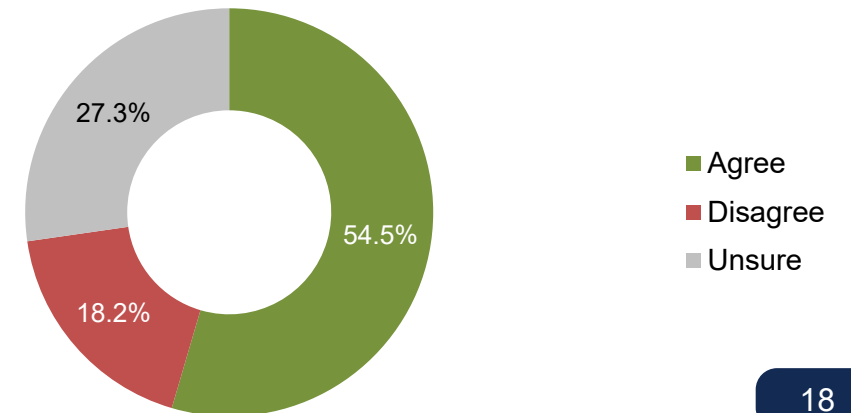
Question 17: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide leadership in completing a County-wide regional multi-use trail system linking different communities.



Among those who initially voted “no”

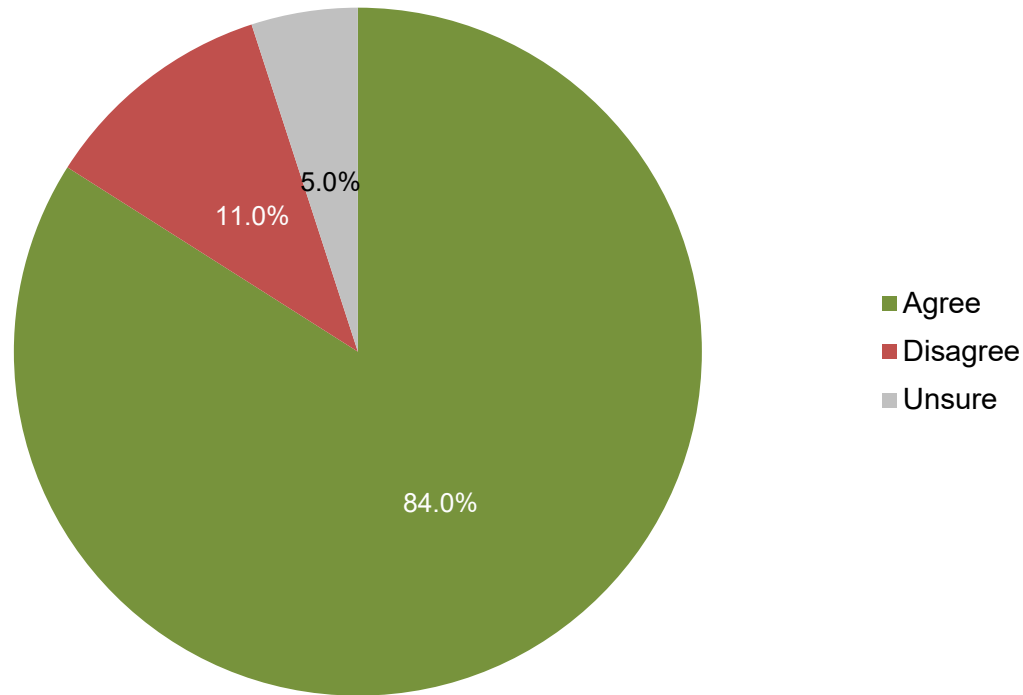


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

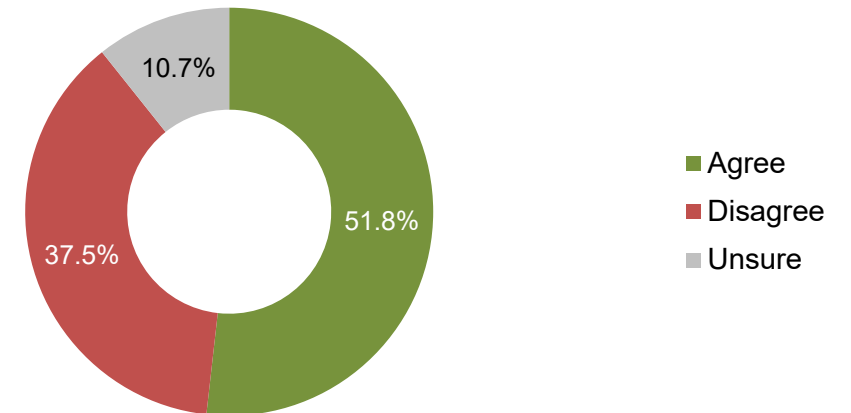


84% agree that the Parks Commission should provide leadership in dedicating resources for significant habitat restoration and green infrastructure projects

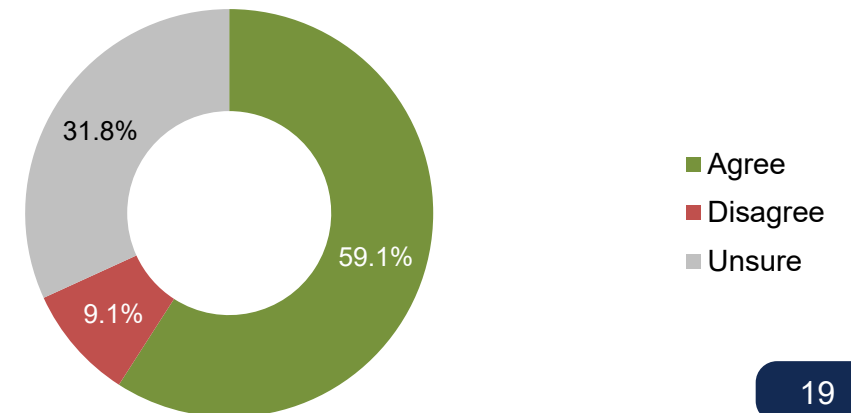
Question 18: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide leadership in dedicating resources to undertake significant habitat restoration and green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



Among those who initially voted “no”

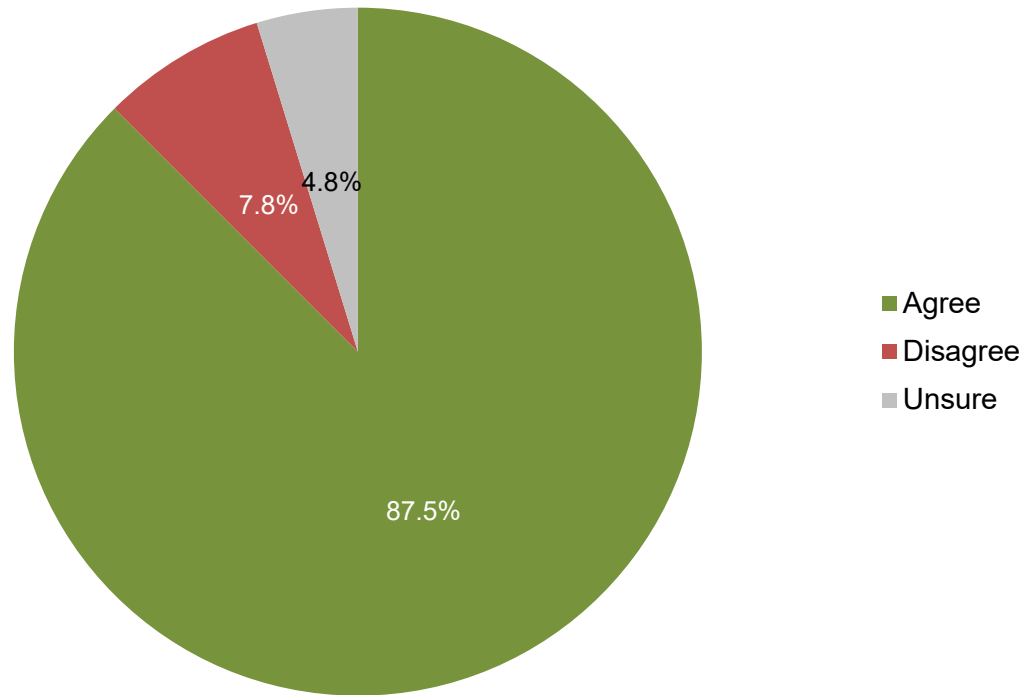


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

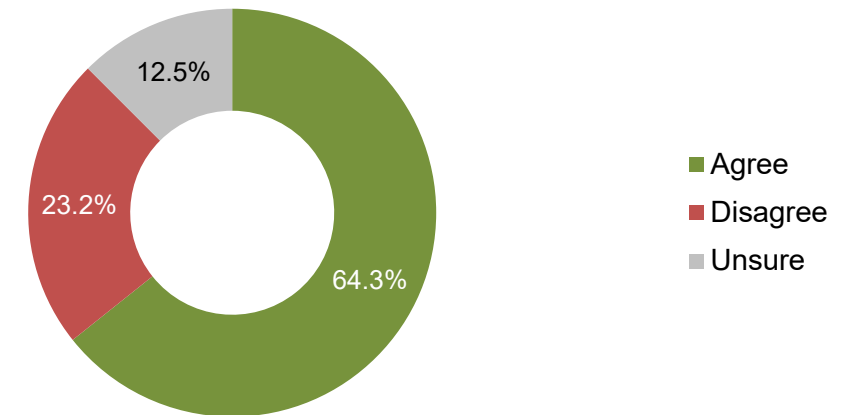


88% agree that the Parks Commission should provide leadership in management of natural lands in Ottawa County to control invasive species and/or overpopulated species

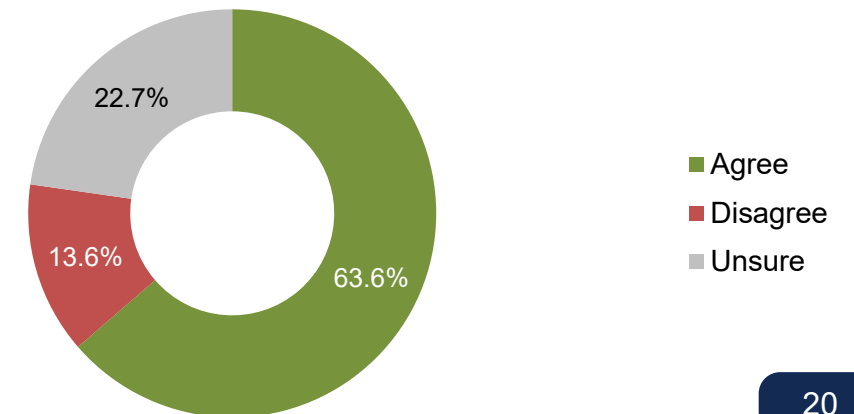
Question 19: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide leadership in management of natural lands in Ottawa County to control invasive species and/or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



Among those who initially voted “no”

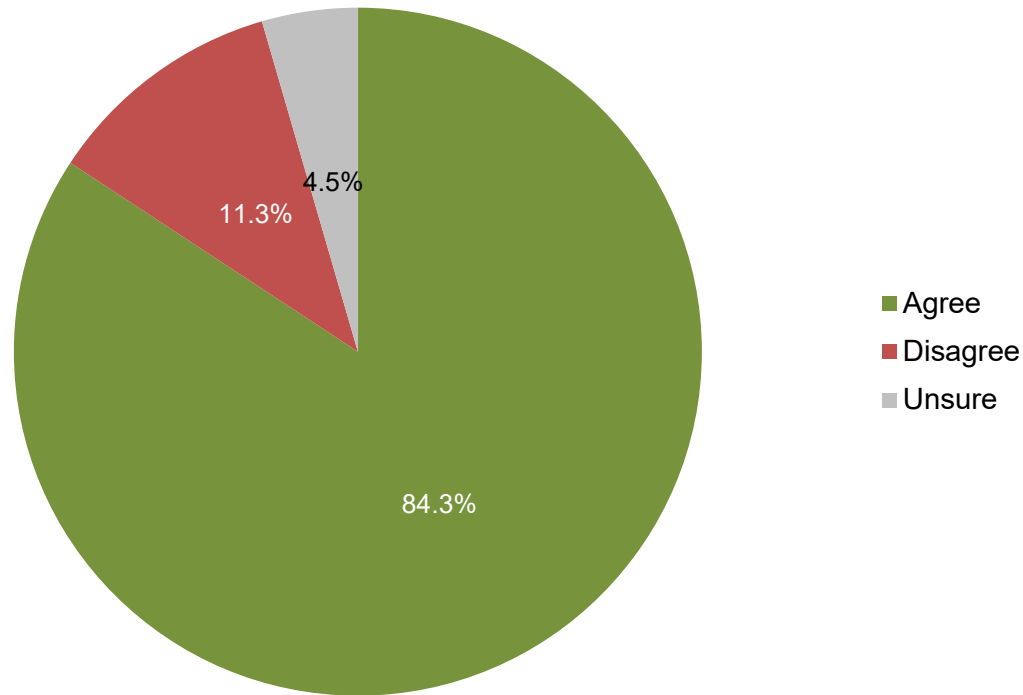


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

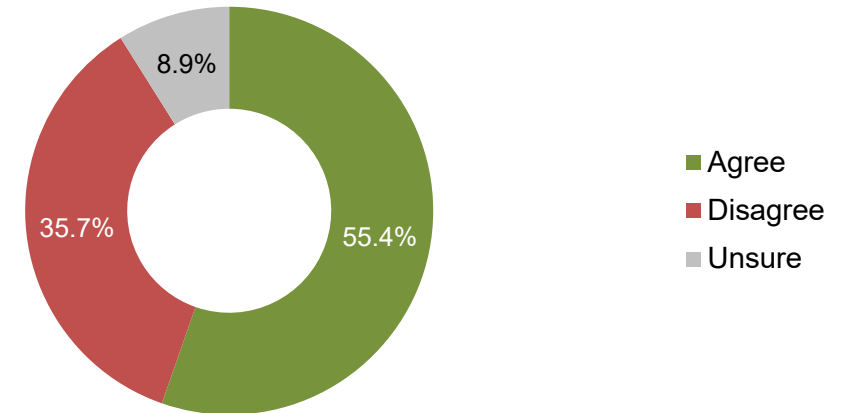


84% agree that the Parks Commission should provide community-wide leadership in engaging the public to experience nature

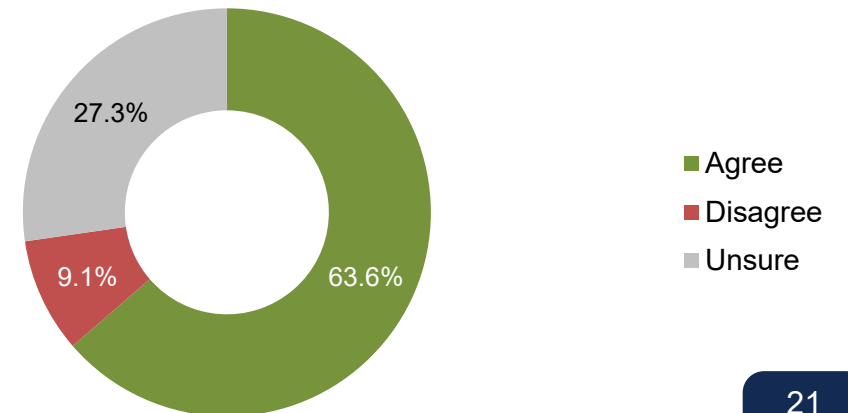
Question 20: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide community-wide leadership in engaging the public to experience nature through outdoor education, recreational programs, and volunteer opportunities.



Among those who initially voted “no”

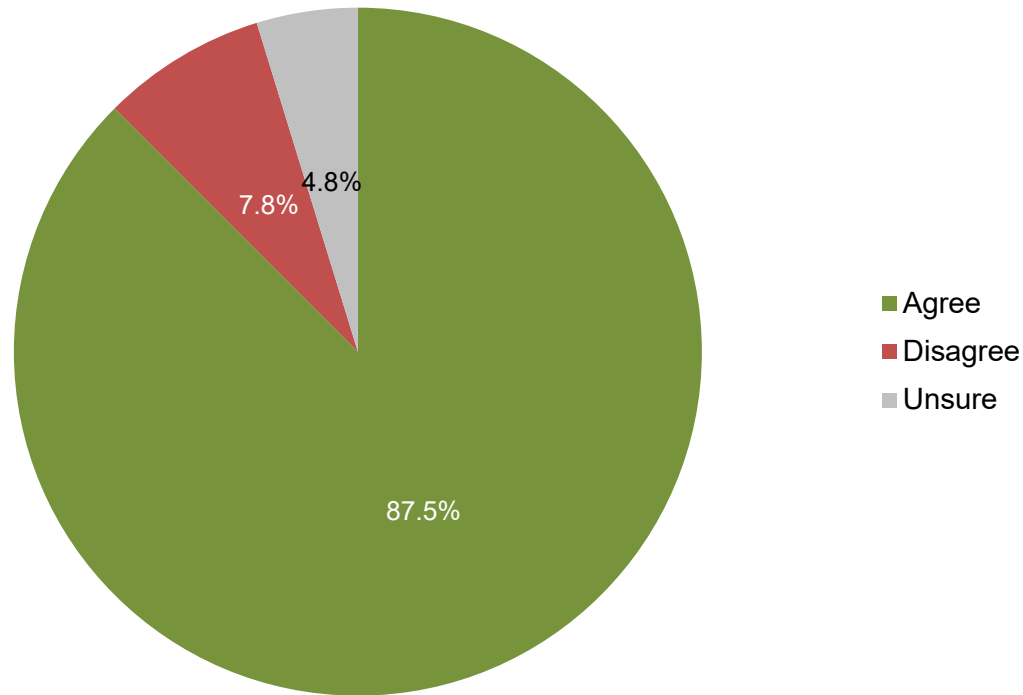


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

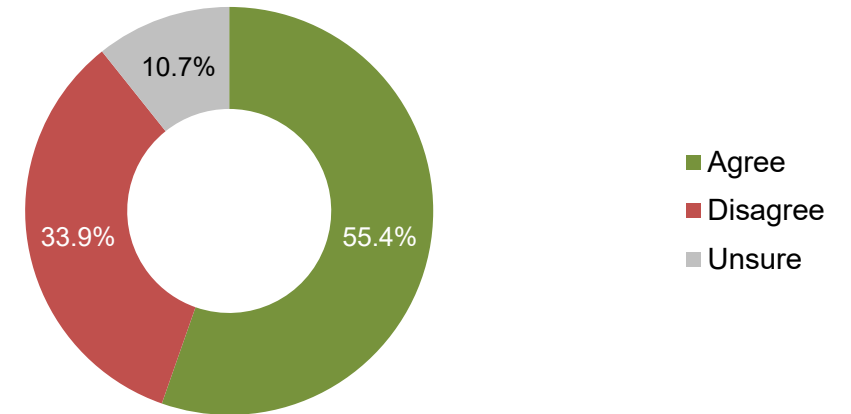


88% agree that the Parks Commission should provide community-wide leadership in ensuring that students get exposure to the outdoors

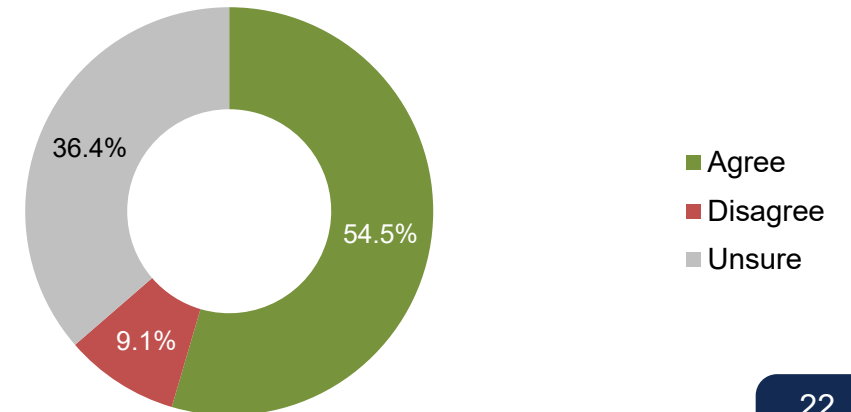
Question 21: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide community-wide leadership in ensuring that students get exposure to the outdoors through curriculum-based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



Among those who initially voted “no”

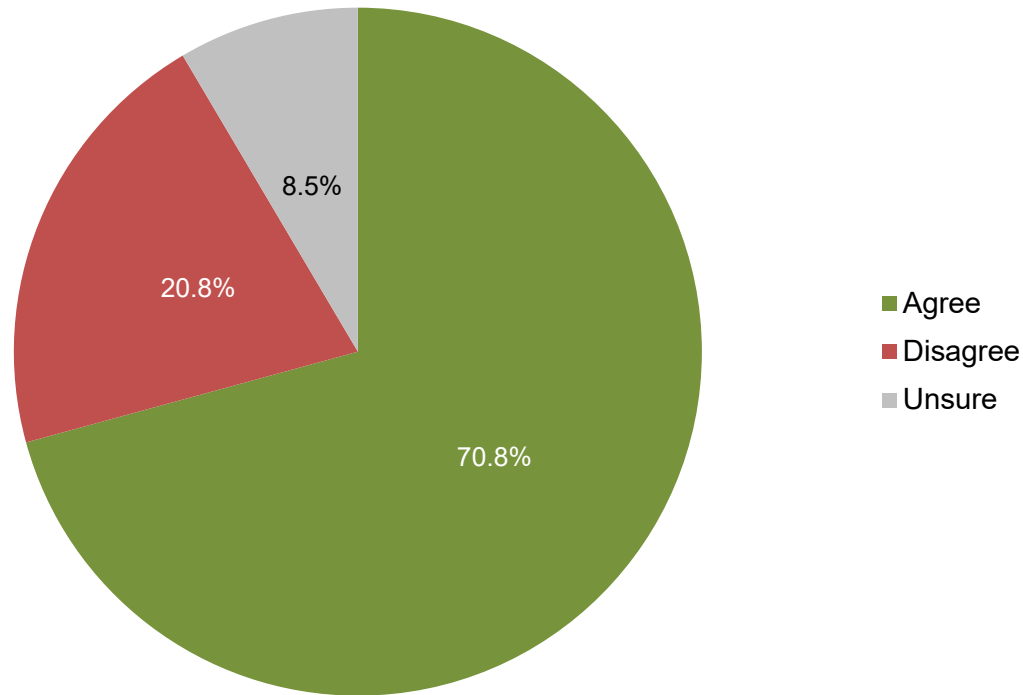


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

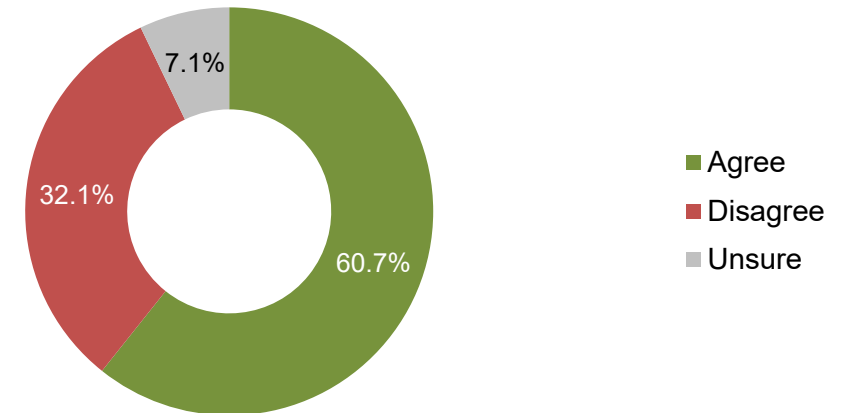


71% agree that the Parks Commission should help finance the parks systems by providing revenue-generating facilities

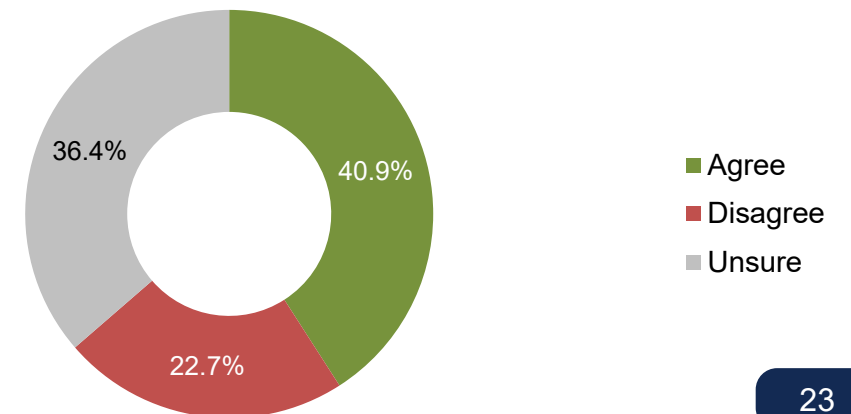
Question 22: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should help finance the parks systems by providing revenue-generating facilities such as large event facilities,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



Among those who initially voted “no”

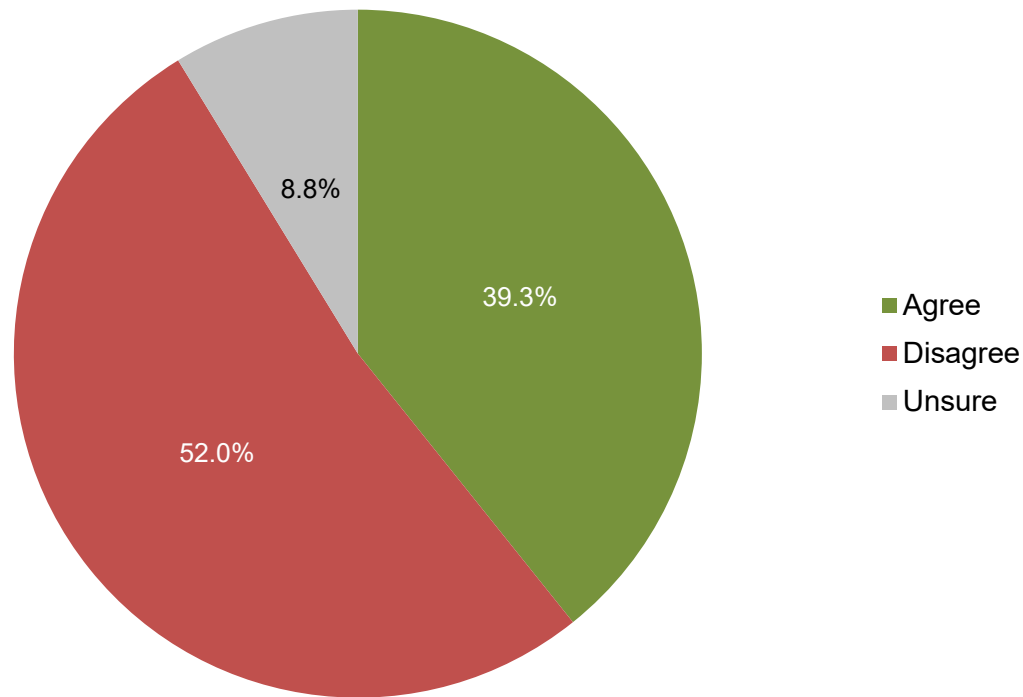


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

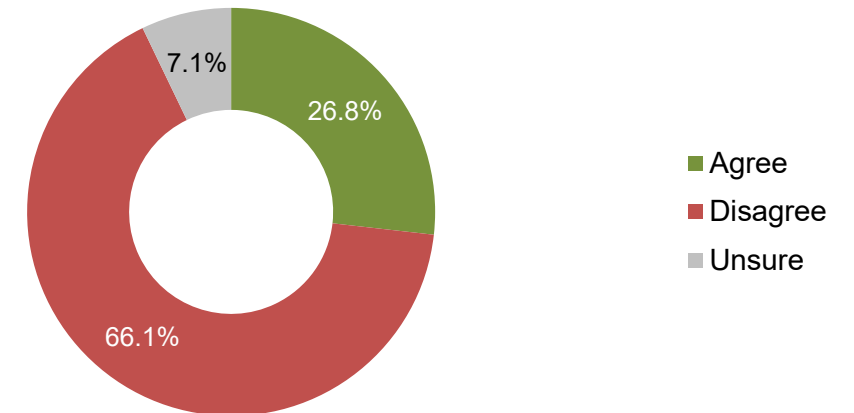


52% disagree that the Parks Commission should dedicate resources to provide high quality venues suitable for weddings or other formal events

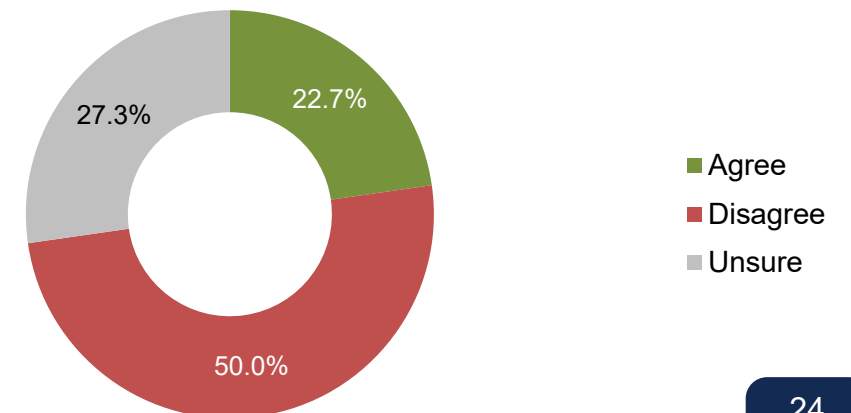
Question 23: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should dedicate resources to provide high quality venues suitable for weddings or other formal events, even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



Among those who initially voted “no”

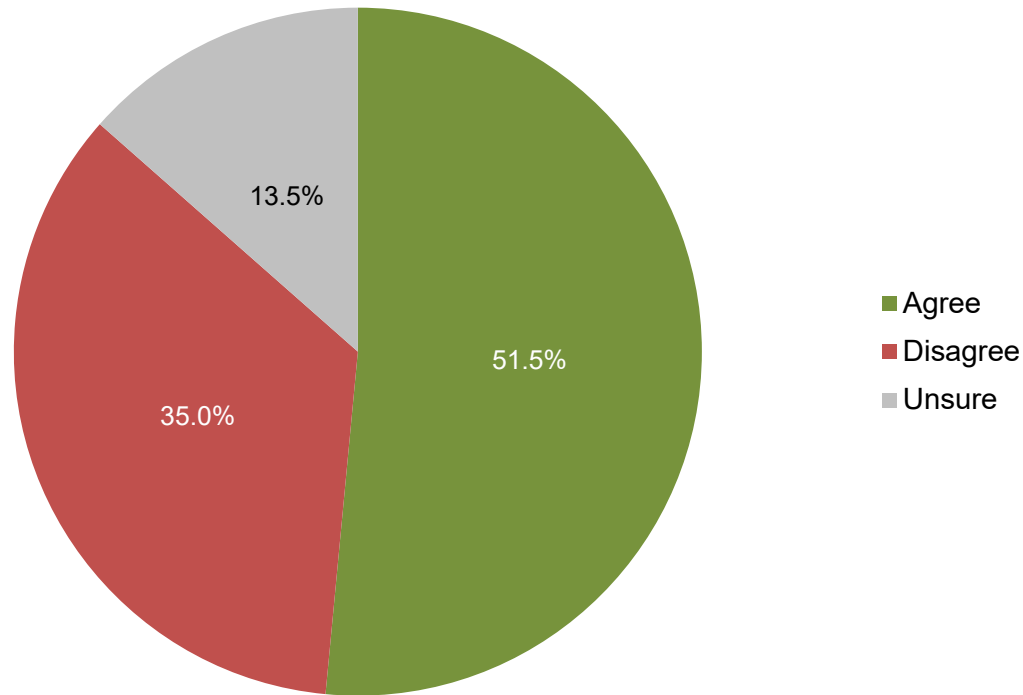


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

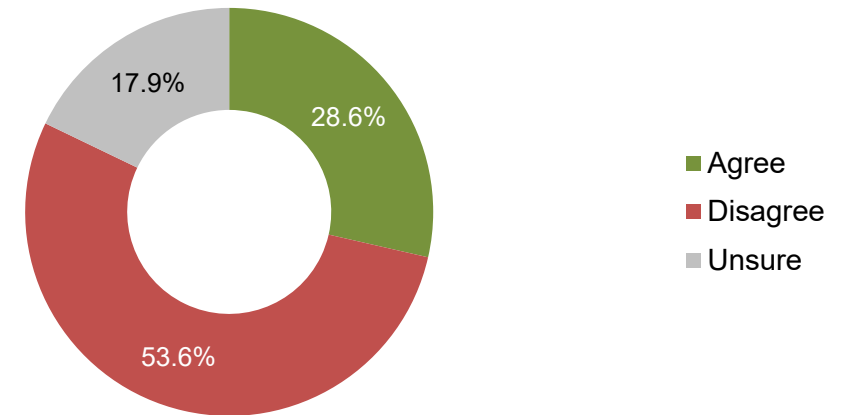


52% agree with the statement that Parks Commission should provide overnight camping facilities that can accommodate RV's

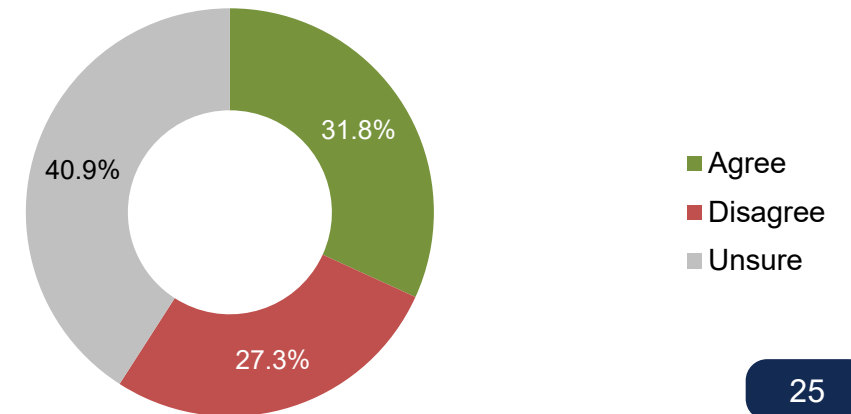
Question 24: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide overnight camping facilities that can accommodate RV's.



Among those who initially voted "no"

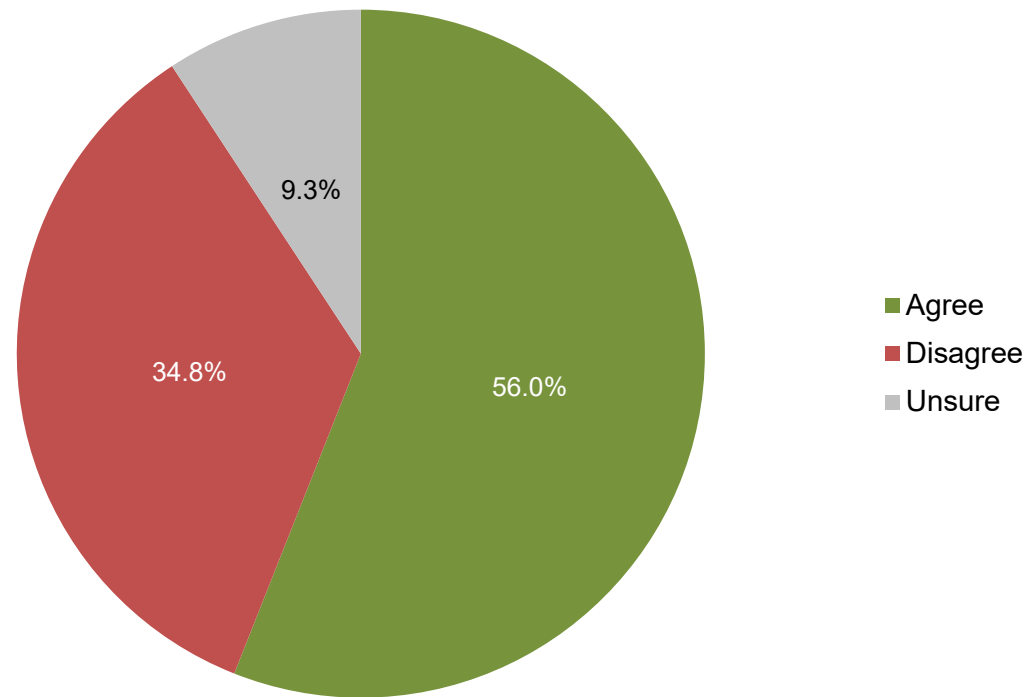


Among those who initially voted "unsure"

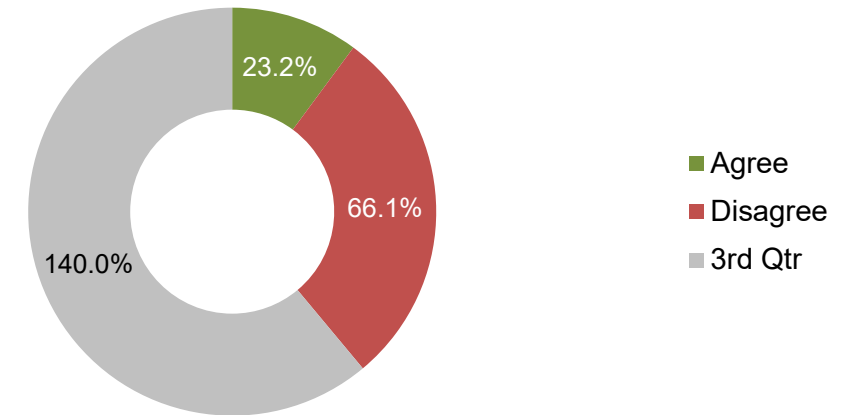


56% agree that Parks Commission should provide additional unique "experience-based" camping that include facilities such as yurts, treehouses, and walk-in tent sites that are being constructed at Ottawa Sands

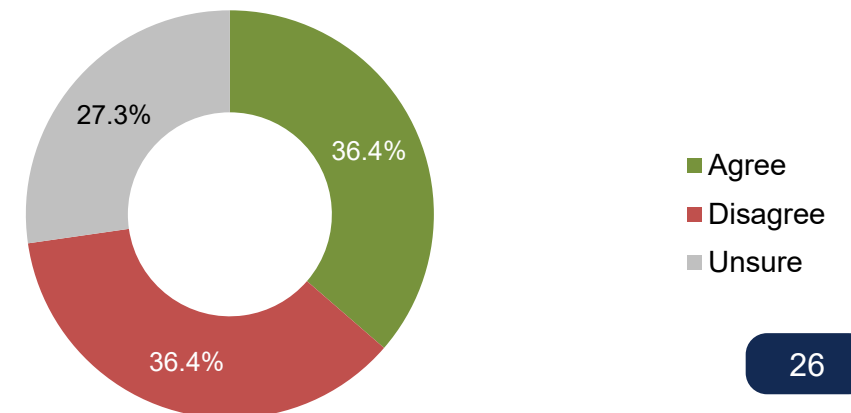
Question 25: Here is a list of initiatives being considered by the Ottawa County Parks Commission. For each one, please indicate if you agree or disagree with that statement. The Parks Commission should provide additional unique "experience-based" camping that include facilities such as yurts, treehouses,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



Among those who initially voted "no"

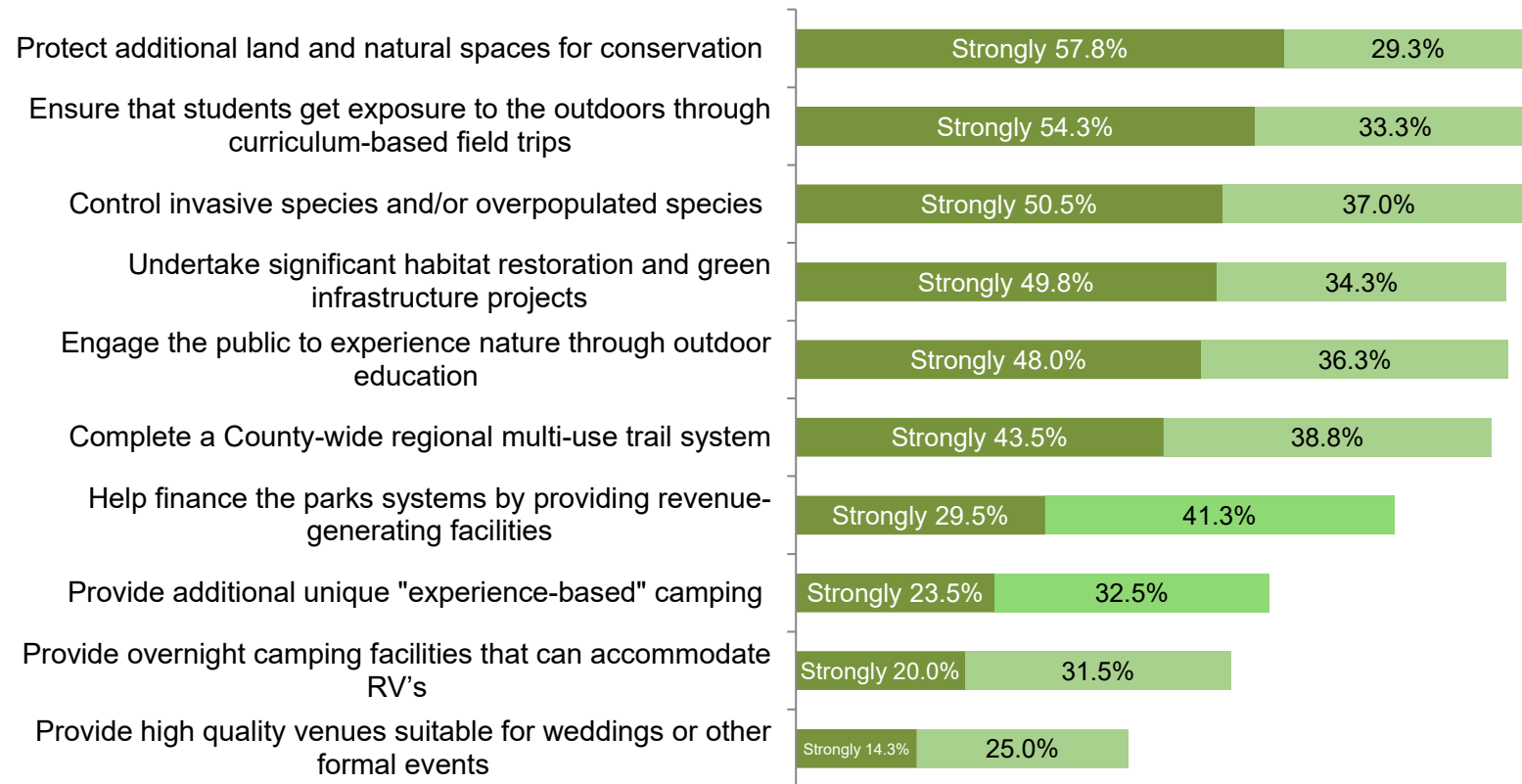


Among those who initially voted "unsure"



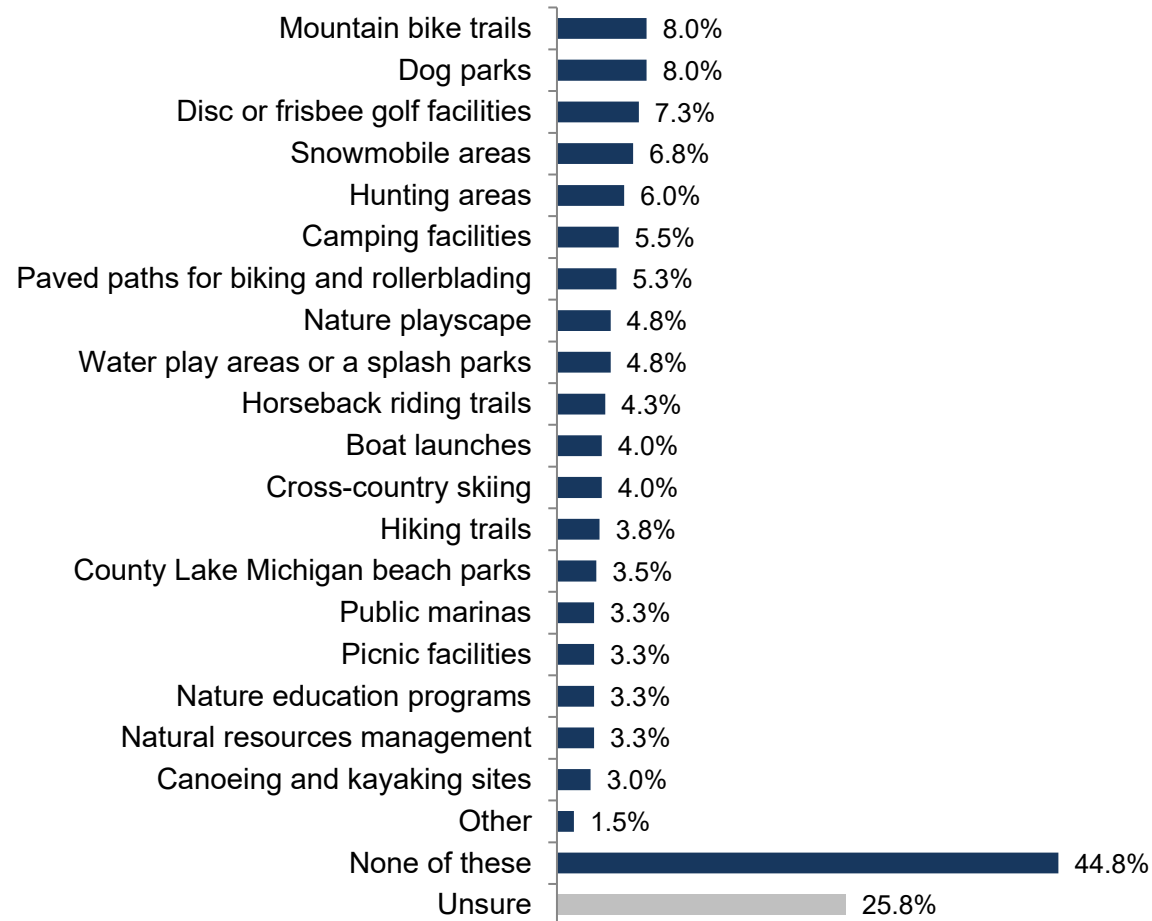
Protecting additional land and natural spaces for conservation is the initiative with the highest intensity

Question 16-25: 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.



Mountain bike trails and dog parks are the top recreational programming opportunities that the Commission currently provides too many of

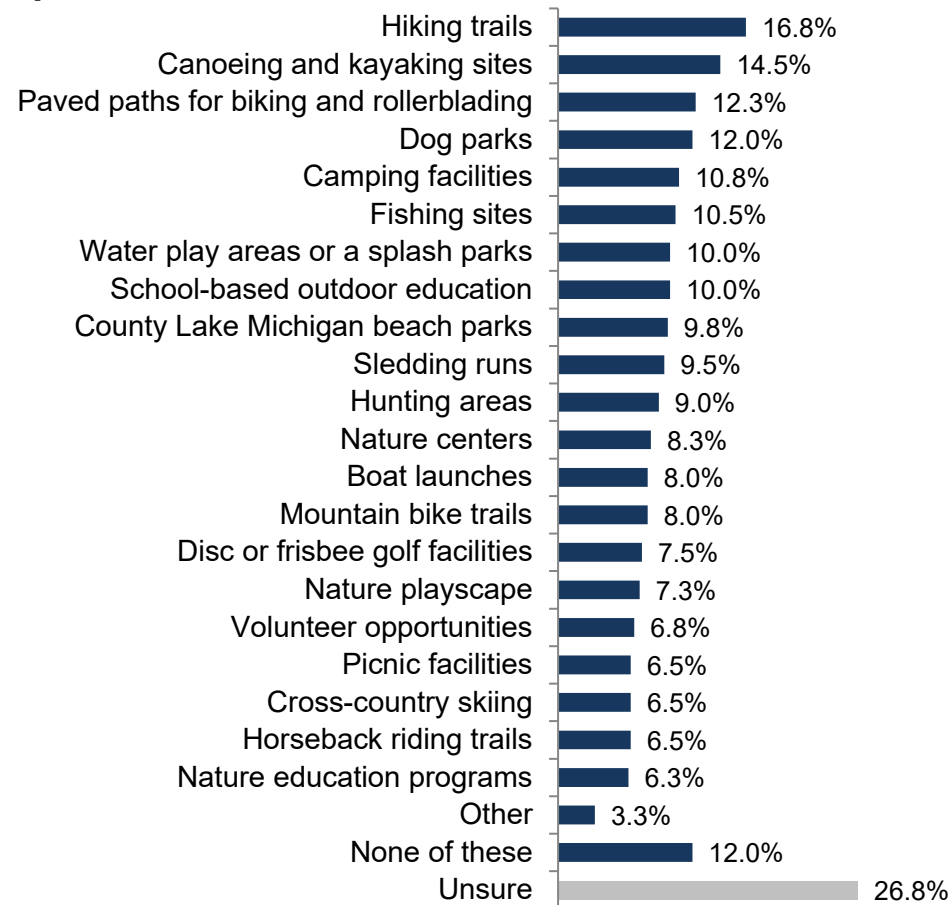
Question 26: Which of the following park facilities and recreational programming opportunities would you say the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission currently provides too many of? Select all that apply.



Hiking trails and canoeing/kayaking sites are the recreational programming opportunities that the Commission provides too few of

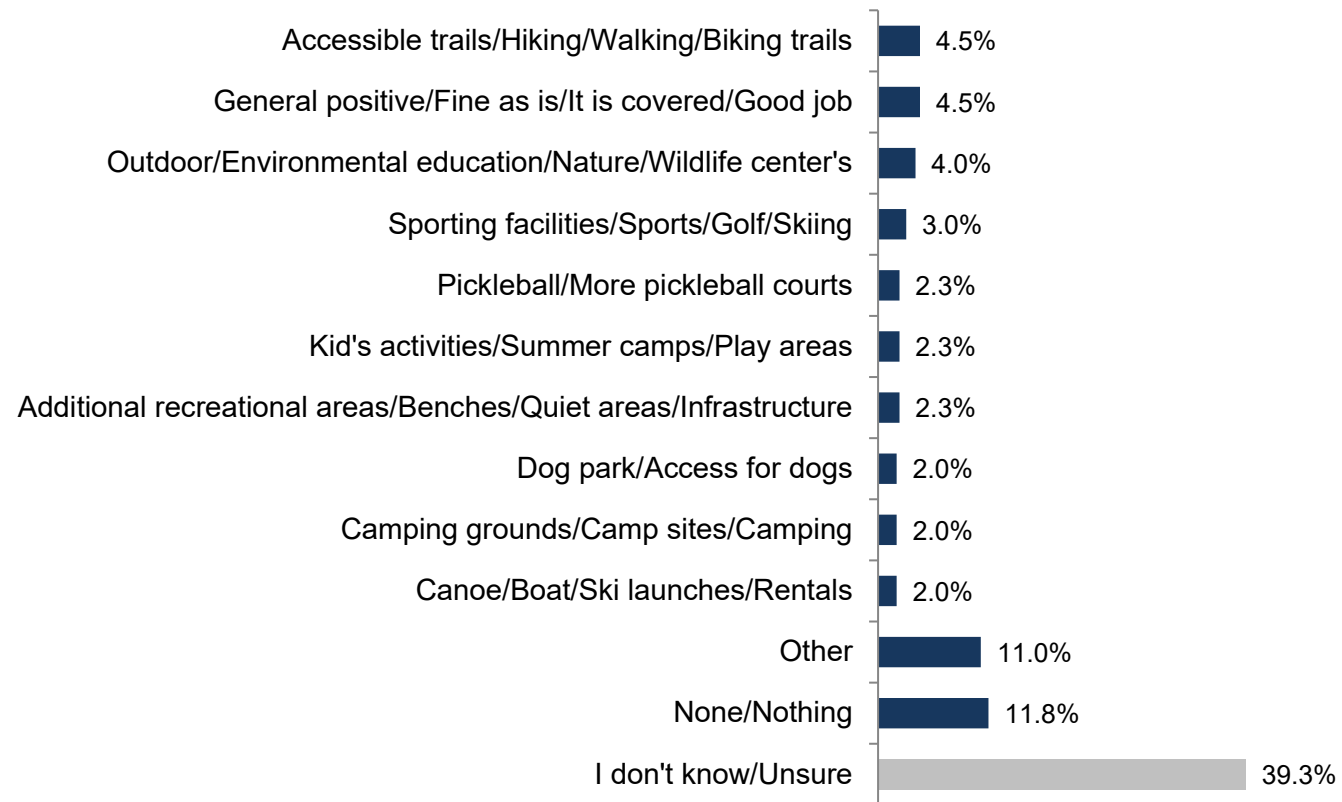
Question 27: Which of the following park facilities and recreational programming opportunities would you say the Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Commission currently provides too few of? Select all that apply.

[OPTIONS SELECTED IN Q26 ELIMINATED]



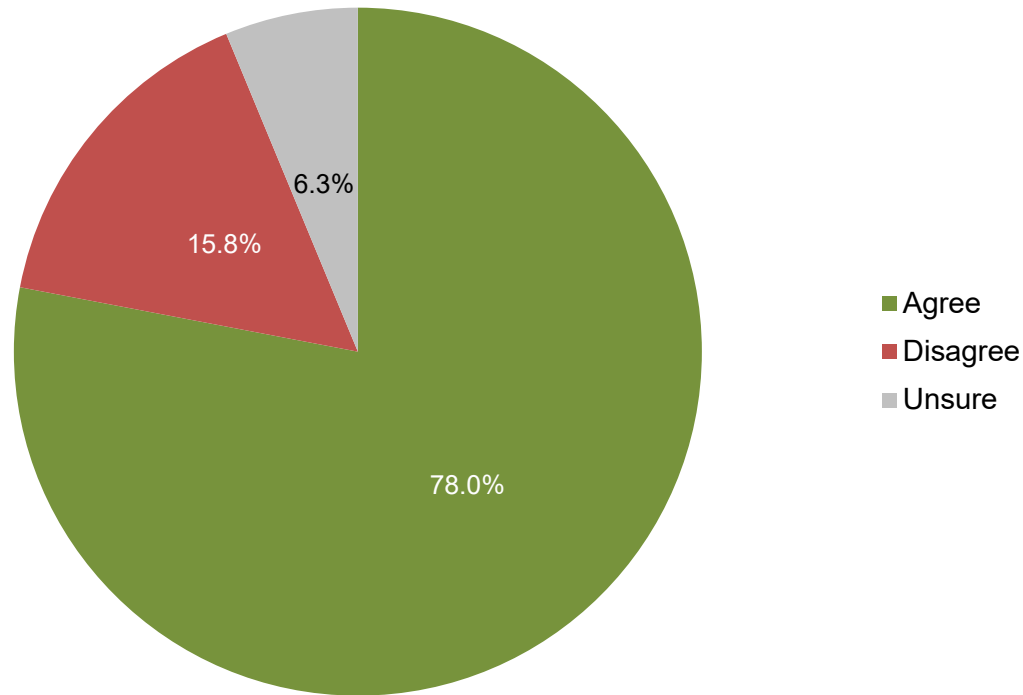
Accessible trails top the list of suggestions

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

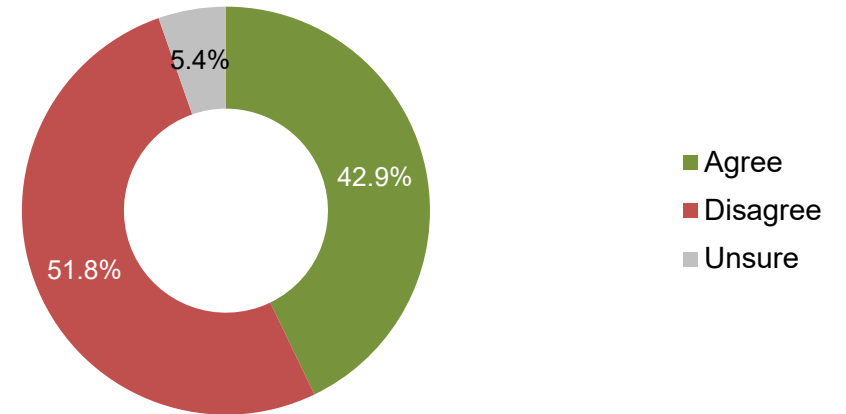


78% agree with the statement that the Parks Commission should acquire land or easements for trails and bike paths

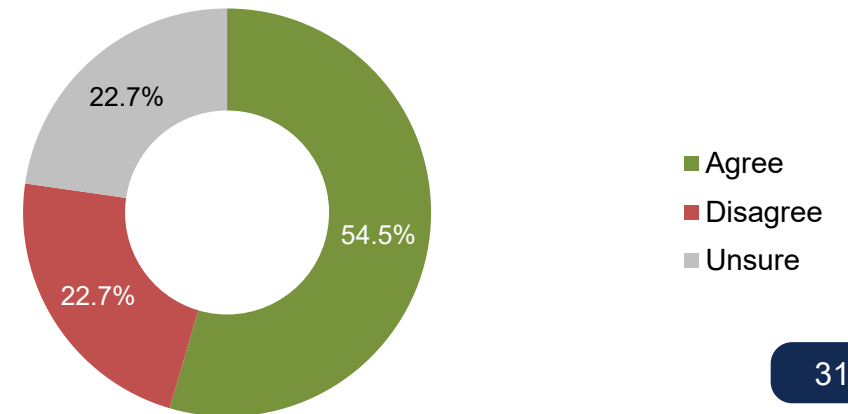
Question 29: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire land or easements for trails and bike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



Among those who initially voted “no”

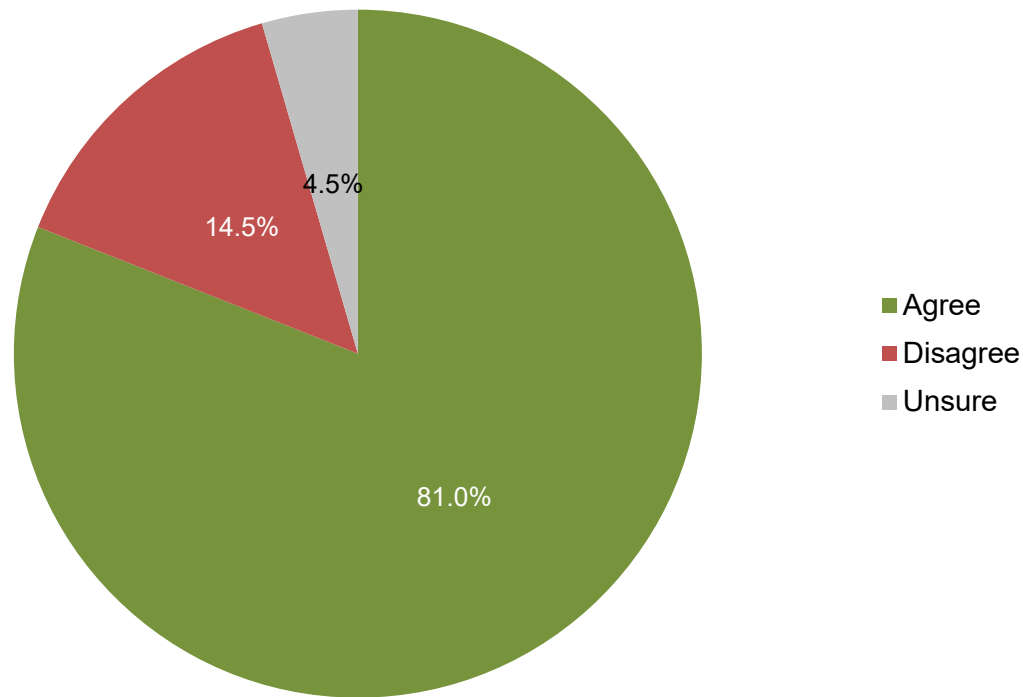


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

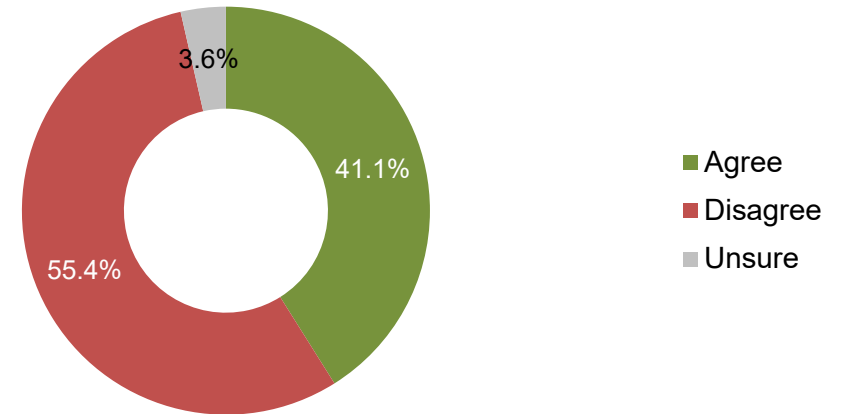


81% agree that the Parks Commission should acquire land or easements to protect unique environmental areas such as wetlands, sand dunes, mature woodlands, and wildlife areas

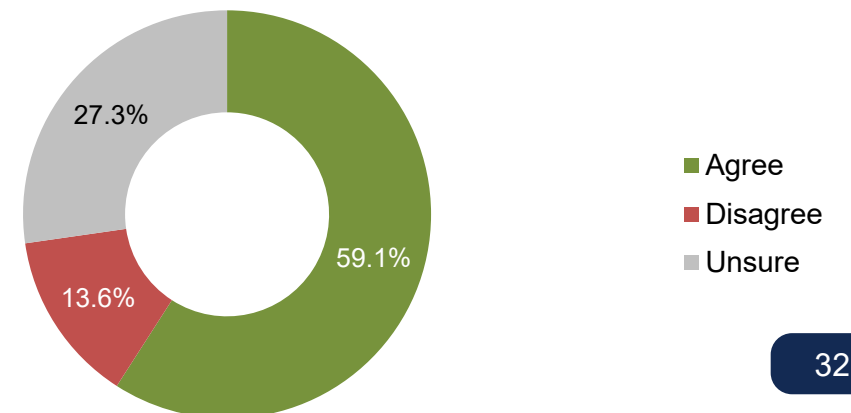
Question 30: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire land or easements to protect unique environmental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



Among those who initially voted “no”

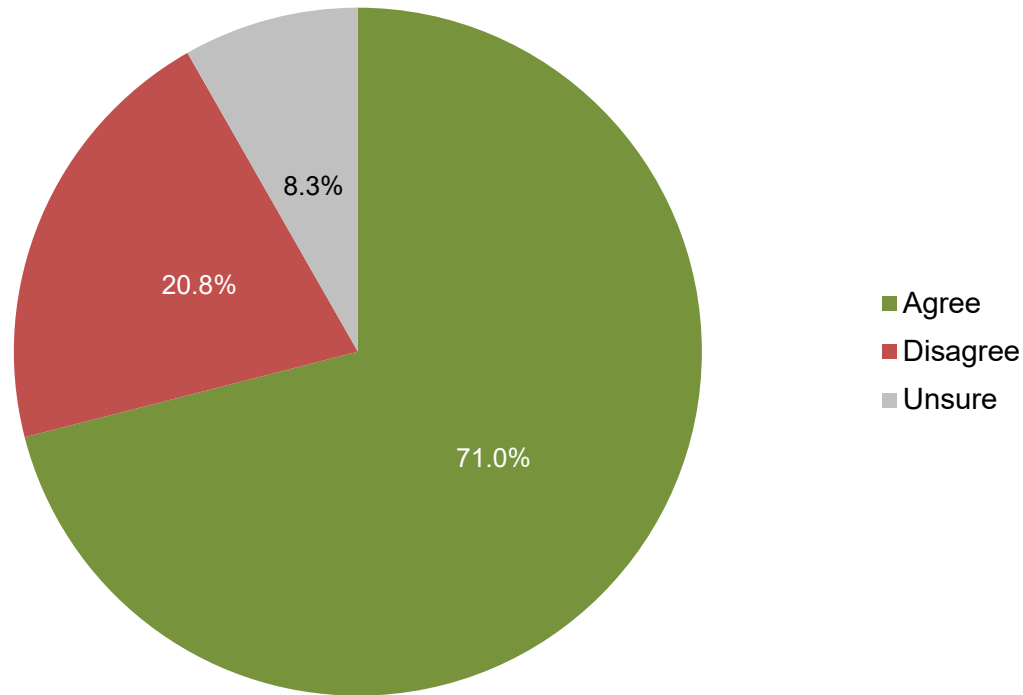


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

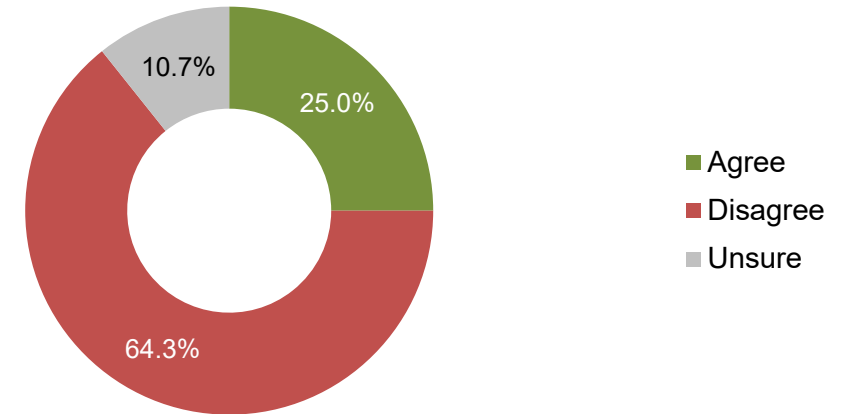


71% agree that the Parks Commission should acquire property for habitat restoration or green infrastructure

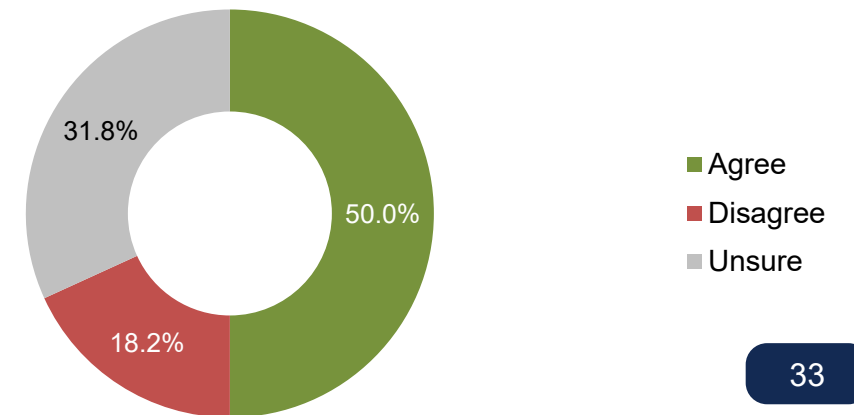
Question 31: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire property for habitat restoration or green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



Among those who initially voted “no”

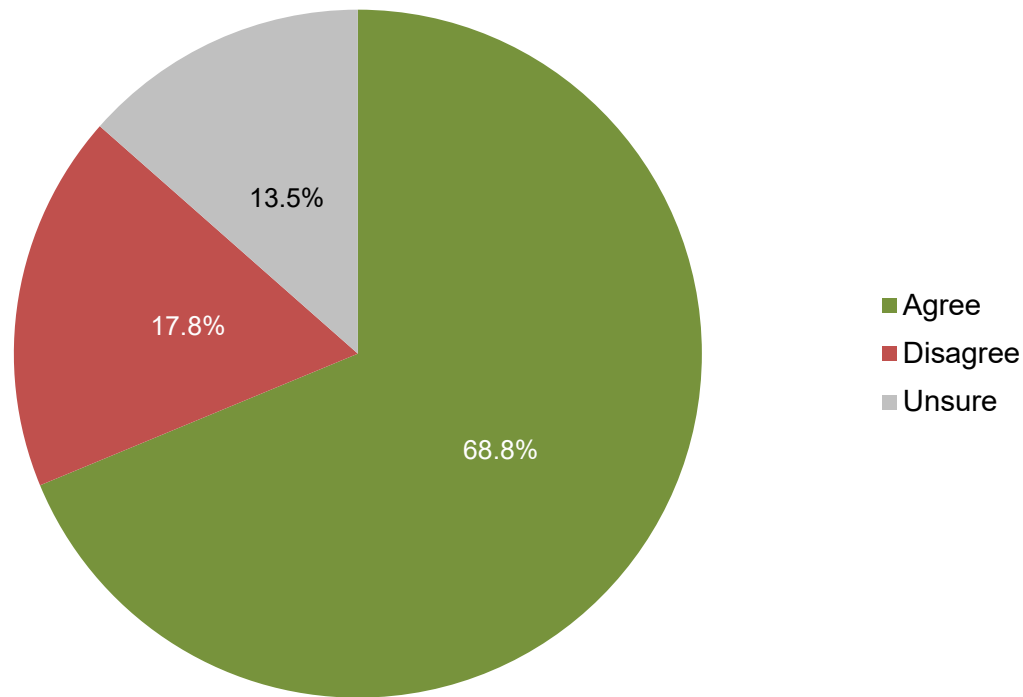


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

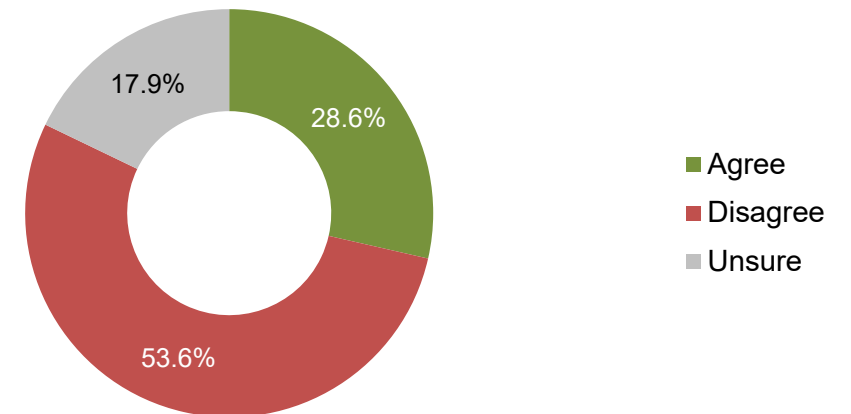


69% agree that the Parks Commission should acquire property in areas of the County with few natural resources-based parks or recreation facilities

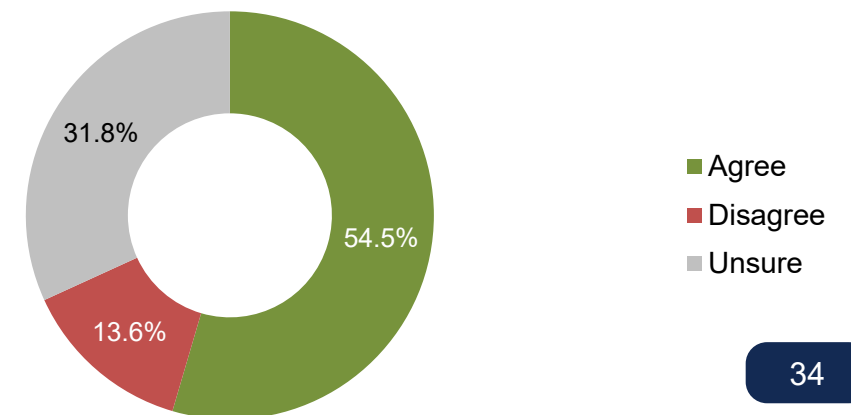
Question 32: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire property in areas of the County currently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



Among those who initially voted “no”

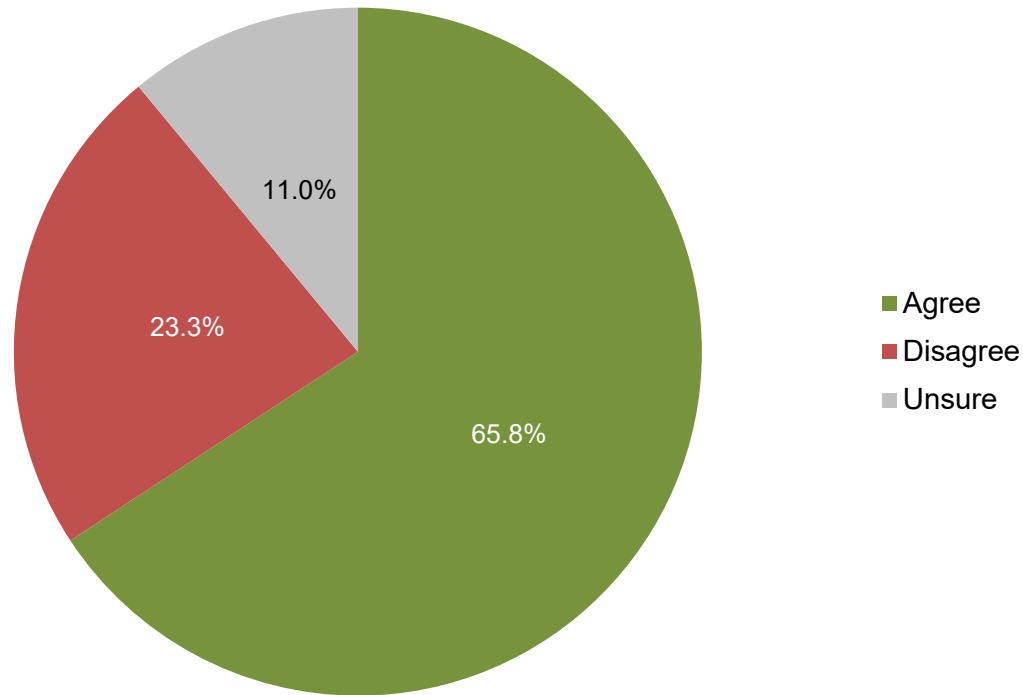


Among those who initially voted “unsure”

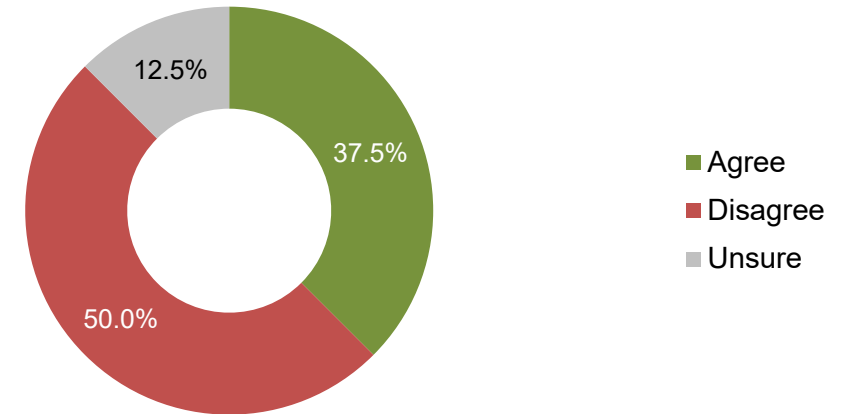


66% agree that the Parks Commission should acquire historic sites

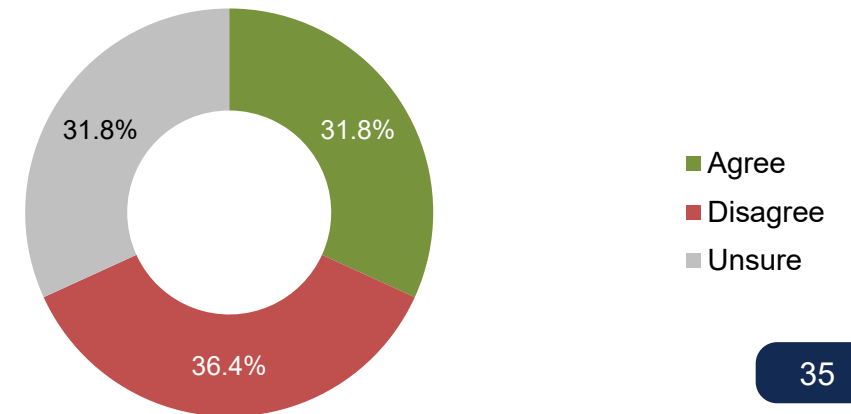
Question 33: Here is a list of ways Ottawa County could expand its park system by acquiring land in the region. For each situation, please indicate if you would agree or disagree with Ottawa County acquiring that type of land. The Parks Commission should acquire historic sites



Among those who initially voted "no"

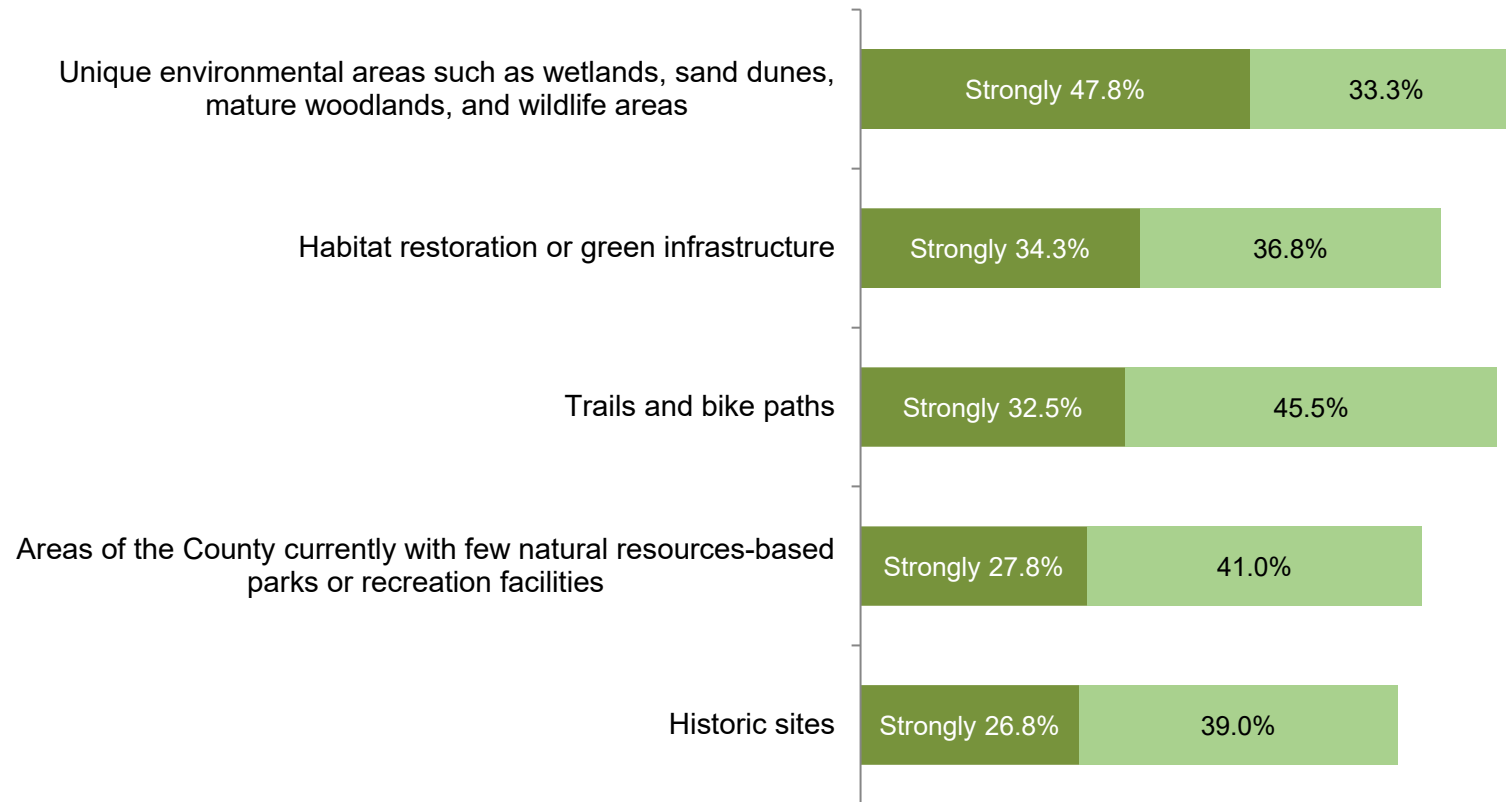


Among those who initially voted "unsure"



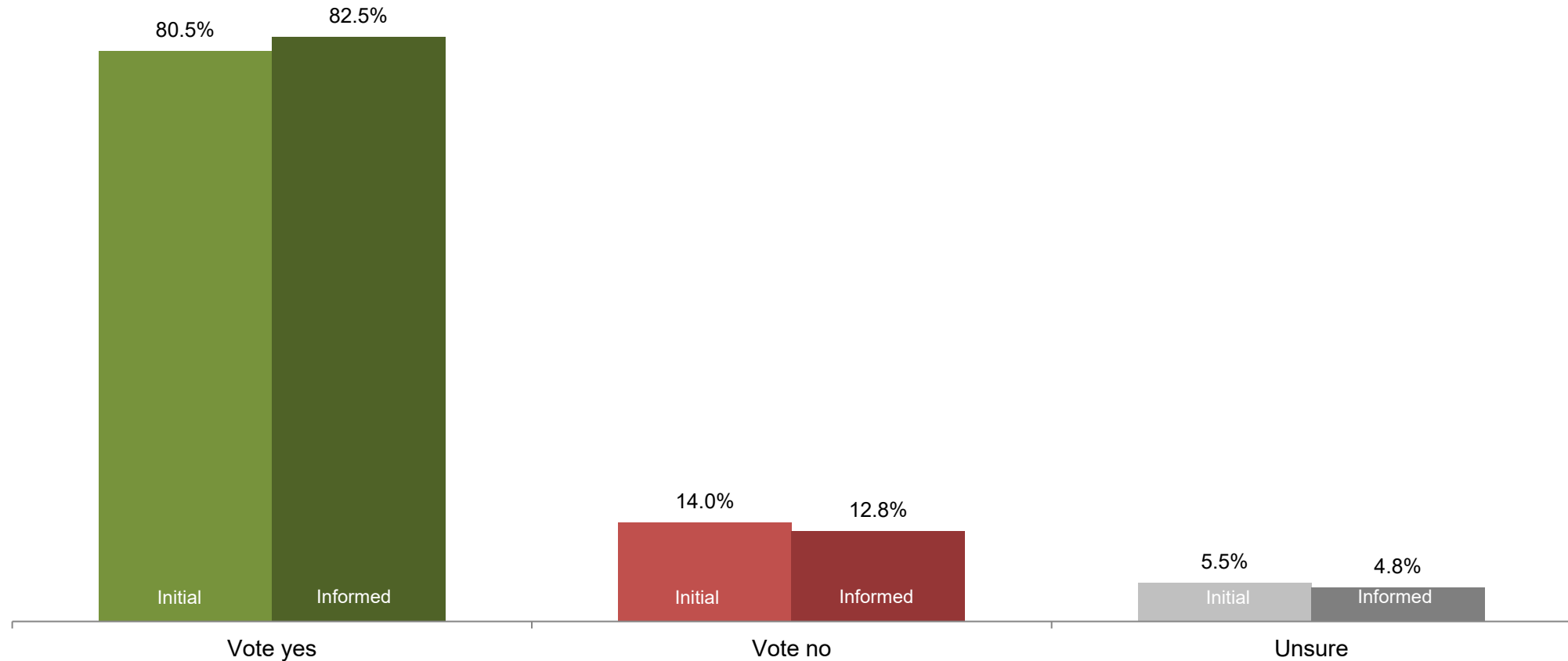
Unique environmental areas such as wetlands is the type of acquired land with the highest intensity

Question 29-33: 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.



Informed vote: 83% vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage

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?

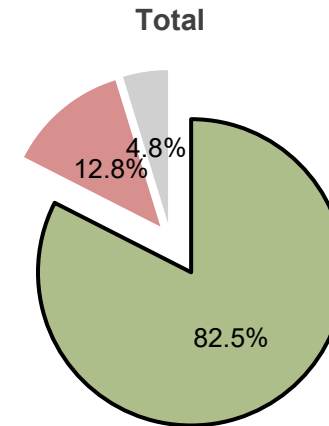
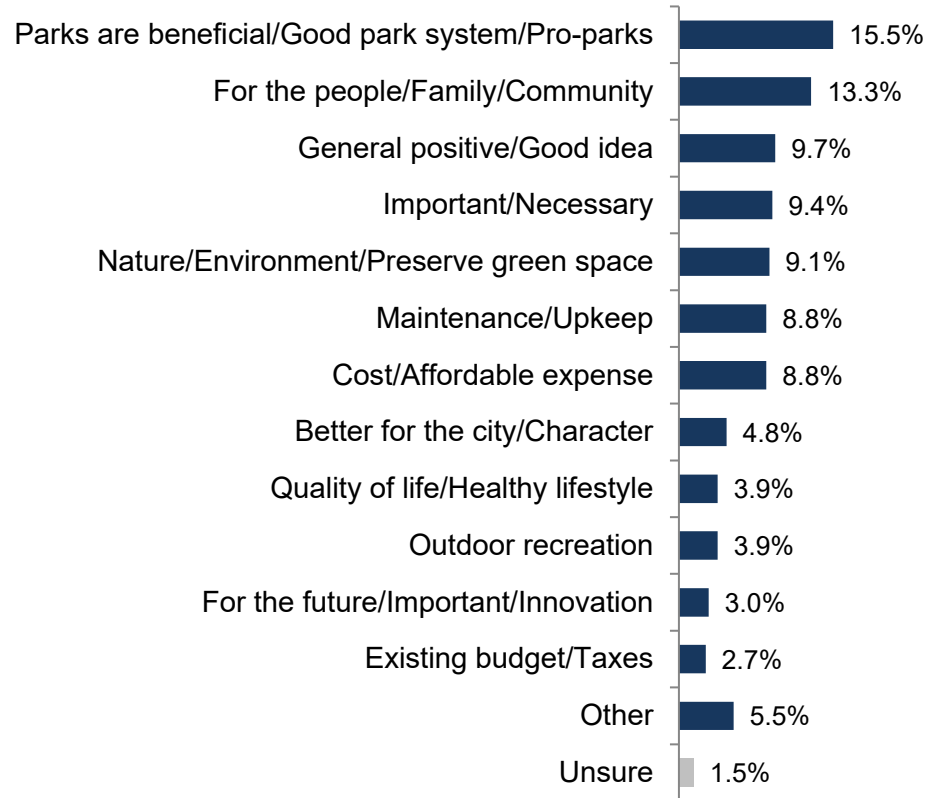


Parks are beneficial/Good park system/Pro-parks were the top reasons for voting yes on the millage renewal

Question 35: Why would you vote yes to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage?

[OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]

[IF ANSWERED 'VOTE YES' TO Q34]

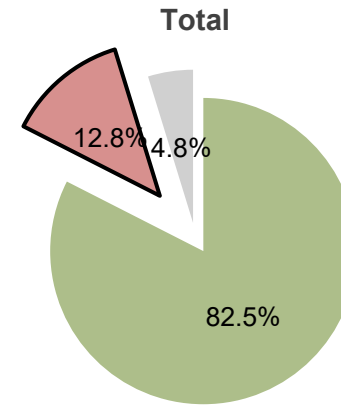
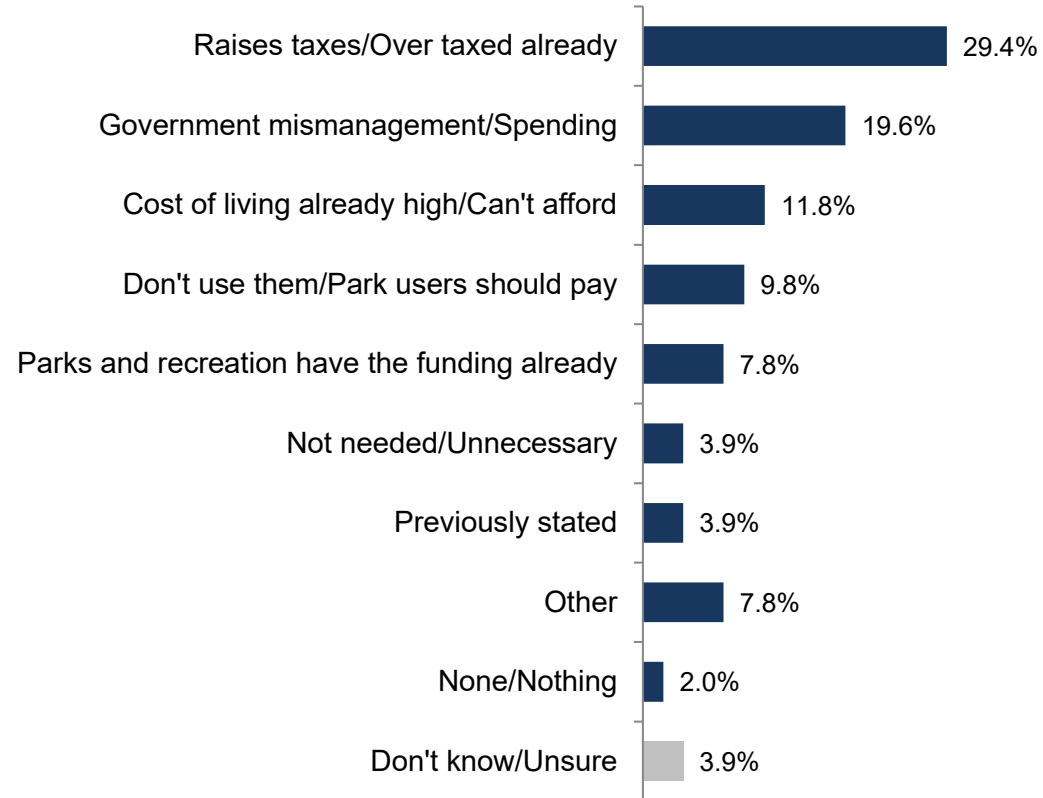


Raises taxes/over-taxed already were the top reasons for voting no on the millage renewal

Question 36: Why would you vote no to renew the dedicated Parks and Recreation millage?

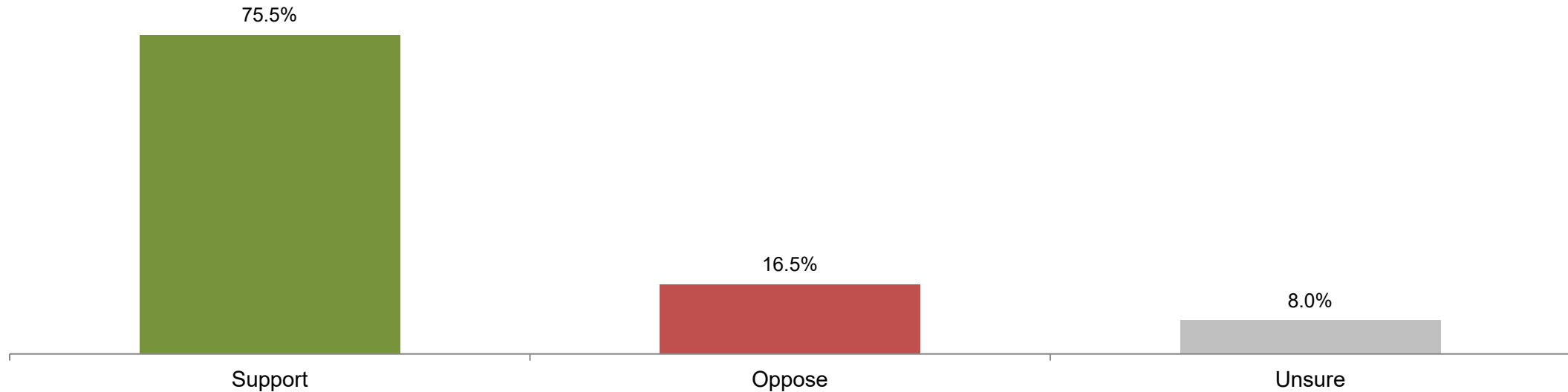
[OPEN-ENDED RESPONSE]

[IF ANSWERED 'VOTE NO' TO Q34]



76% support an increased millage that would focus on the protection and management of the County's most sensitive natural resources

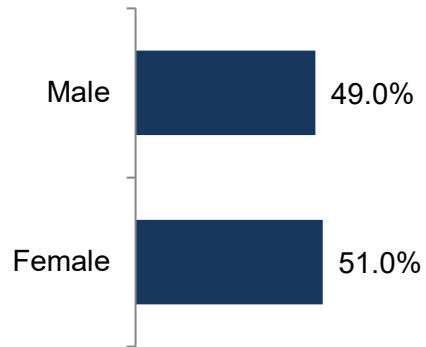
Question 37: Knowing what you know now, would you support or oppose an increased millage that would focus on the protection and management of the County's most sensitive natural resources, expanded outdoor education, and development of new natural resources-based recreation facilities and trails?



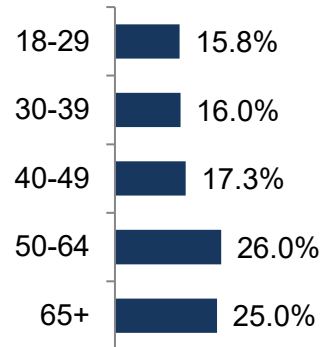
Demographics

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

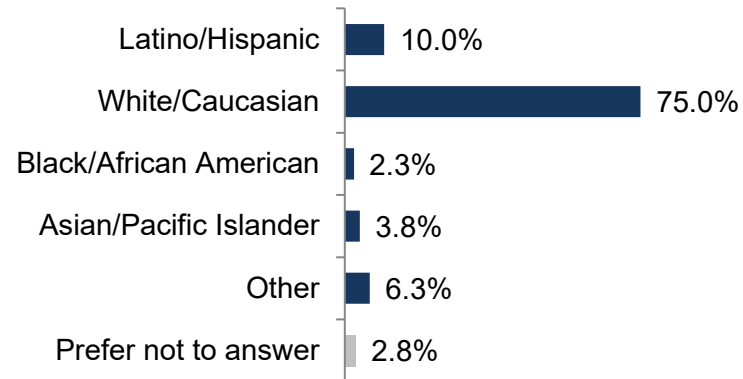
Gender



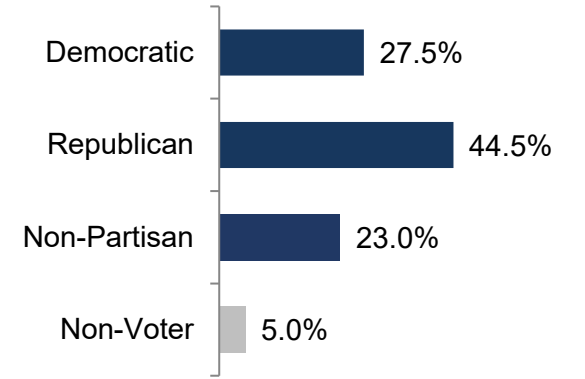
Age Group



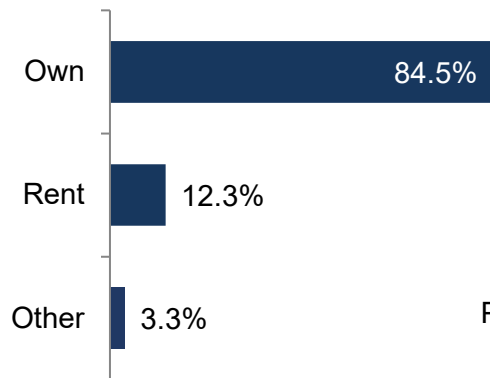
Ethnicity



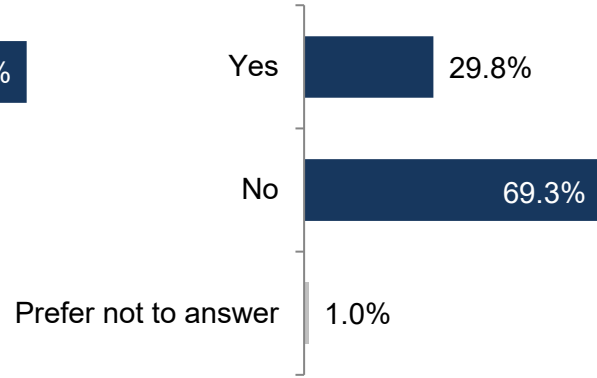
Party Preference



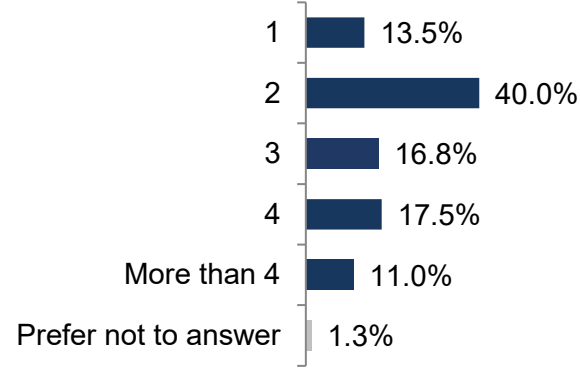
Home Type



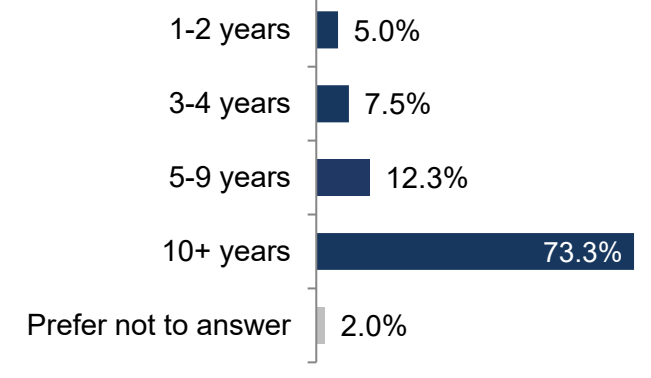
Children in Home



Household Size

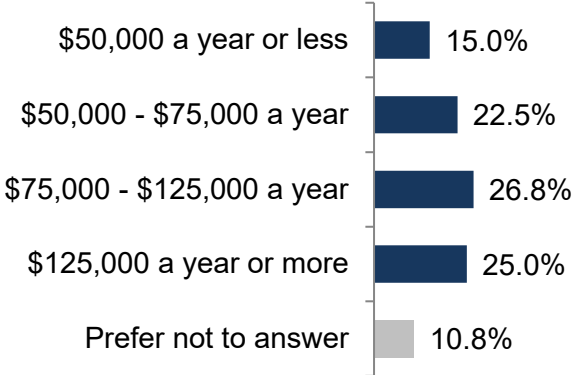


Years of Residency

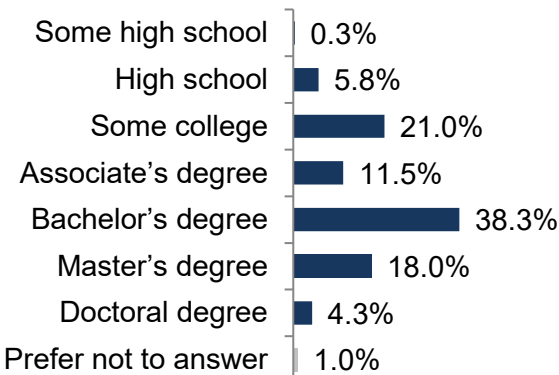


Respondent demographics by household income, education level, municipality, Michigan Hunting/Fishing license holder, and County Commissioner District

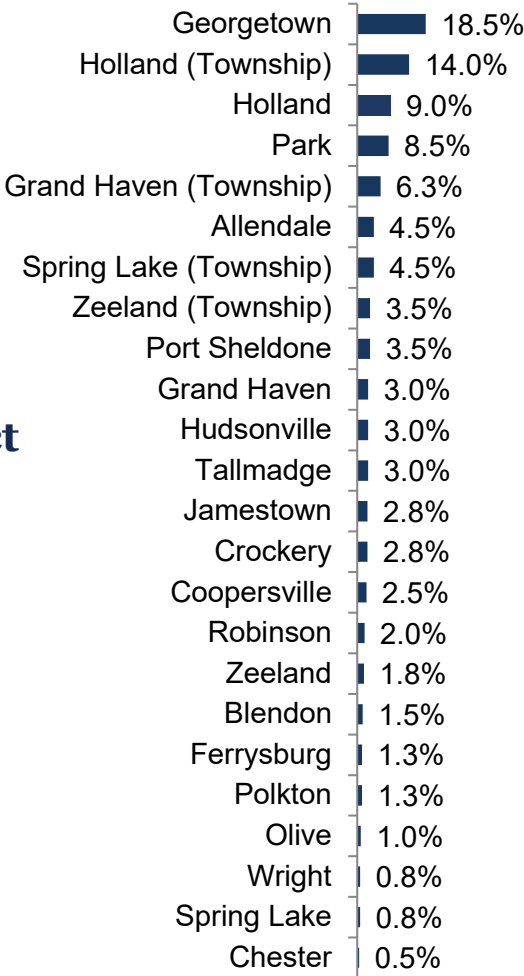
Household Income



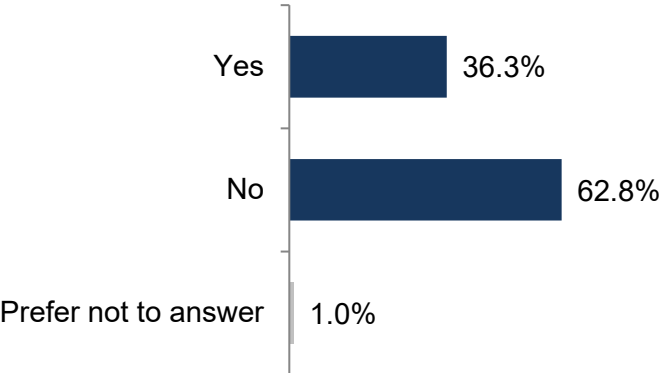
Education Level



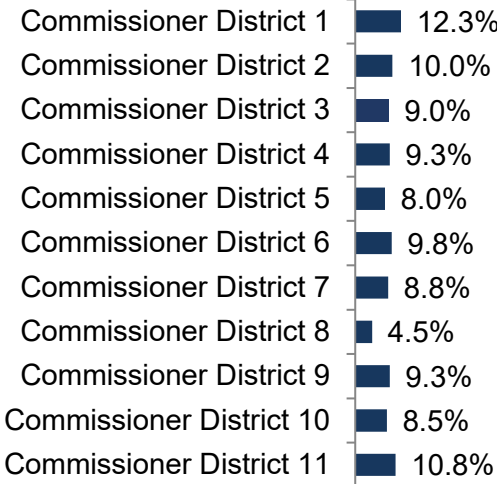
Municipality



Hunting/Fishing License Holder



County Commissioner District



Questions?

Adam Probolsky, President

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E: adamp@probolskyresearch.com

Michael McLaughlin, Research Director

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Opinion Research on
Elections and Public Policy



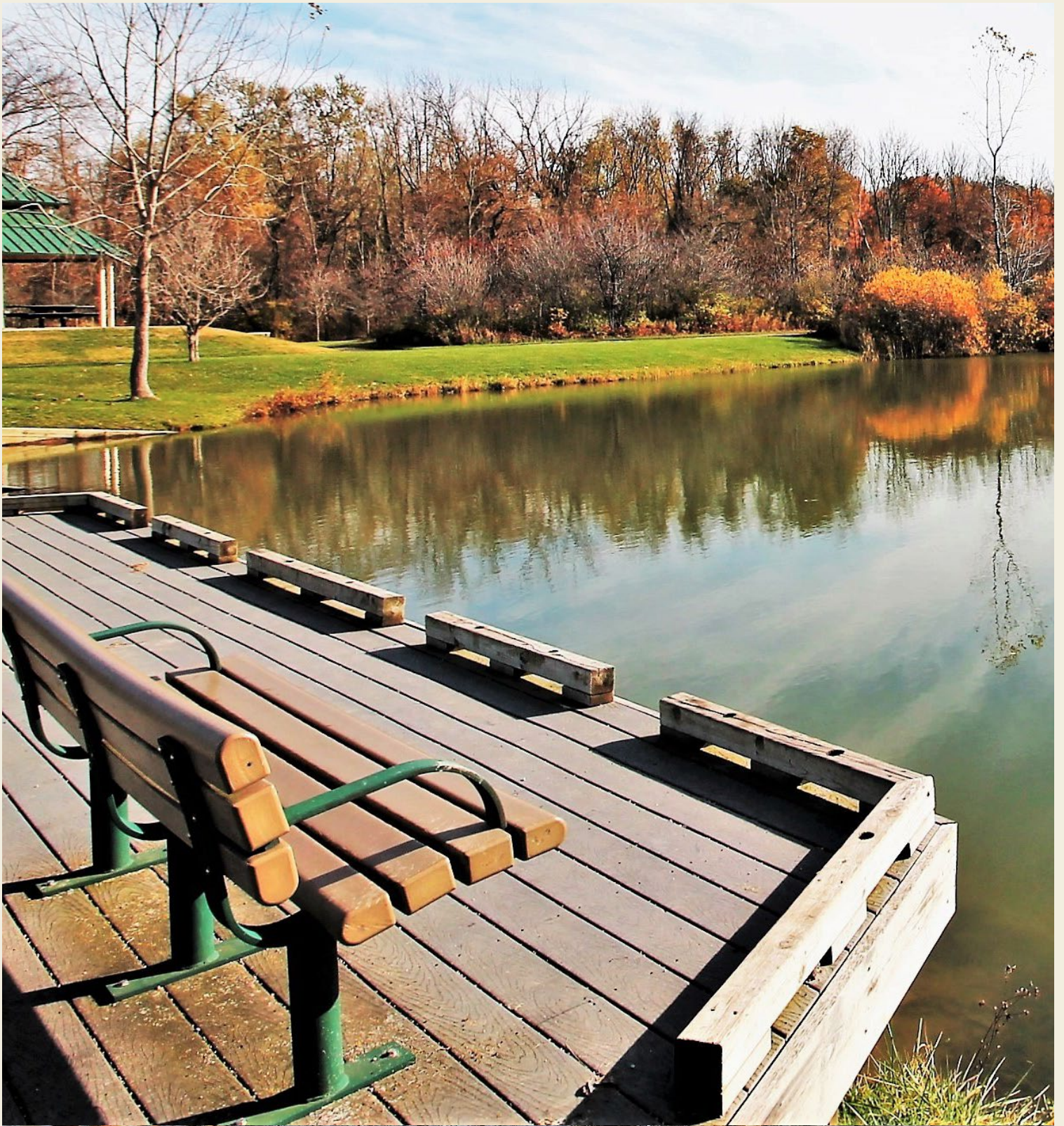
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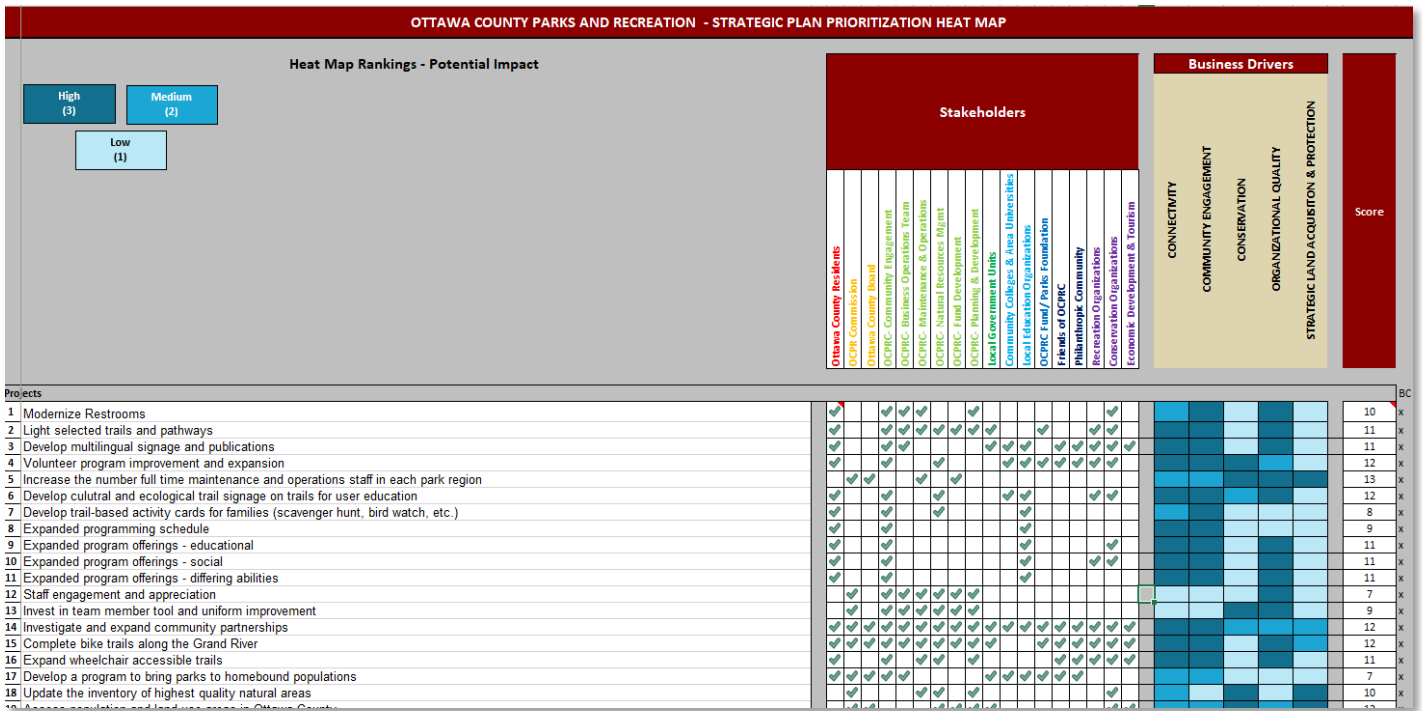


Appendix D: Strategy Lab Outputs

Heat Map

OCPRC staff and key stakeholders created a Heat Map by identifying various projects in alignment with the five strategic 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.

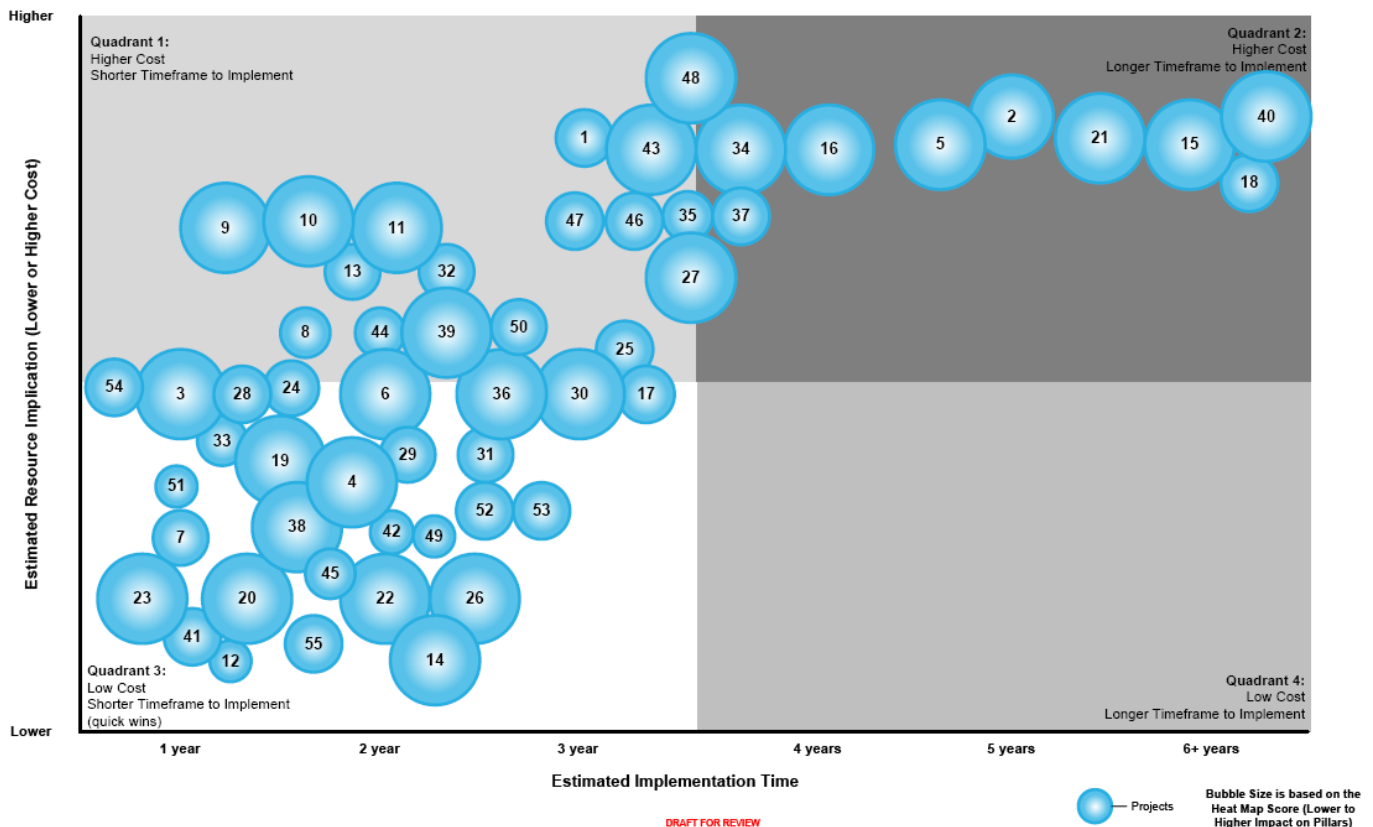


This image does not display all the projects identified.

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 strategic initiatives and the Commission’s overall purpose, for the long-term success and growth of the Ottawa County Parks system.

Ottawa County Parks and Recreation Strategic Plan: Bubble Chart & Prioritization Timeline
 Comparing Initiatives by Resource Implications (Vertical Axis), Timeline to Implement (Horizontal Axis), and Impact (Bubble Size)



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 strategic 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
21	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
30	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 strategic 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/marketing 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	Community Engagement
Increase the number of interpretive and nature staff at the Nature Center	Community Engagement
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



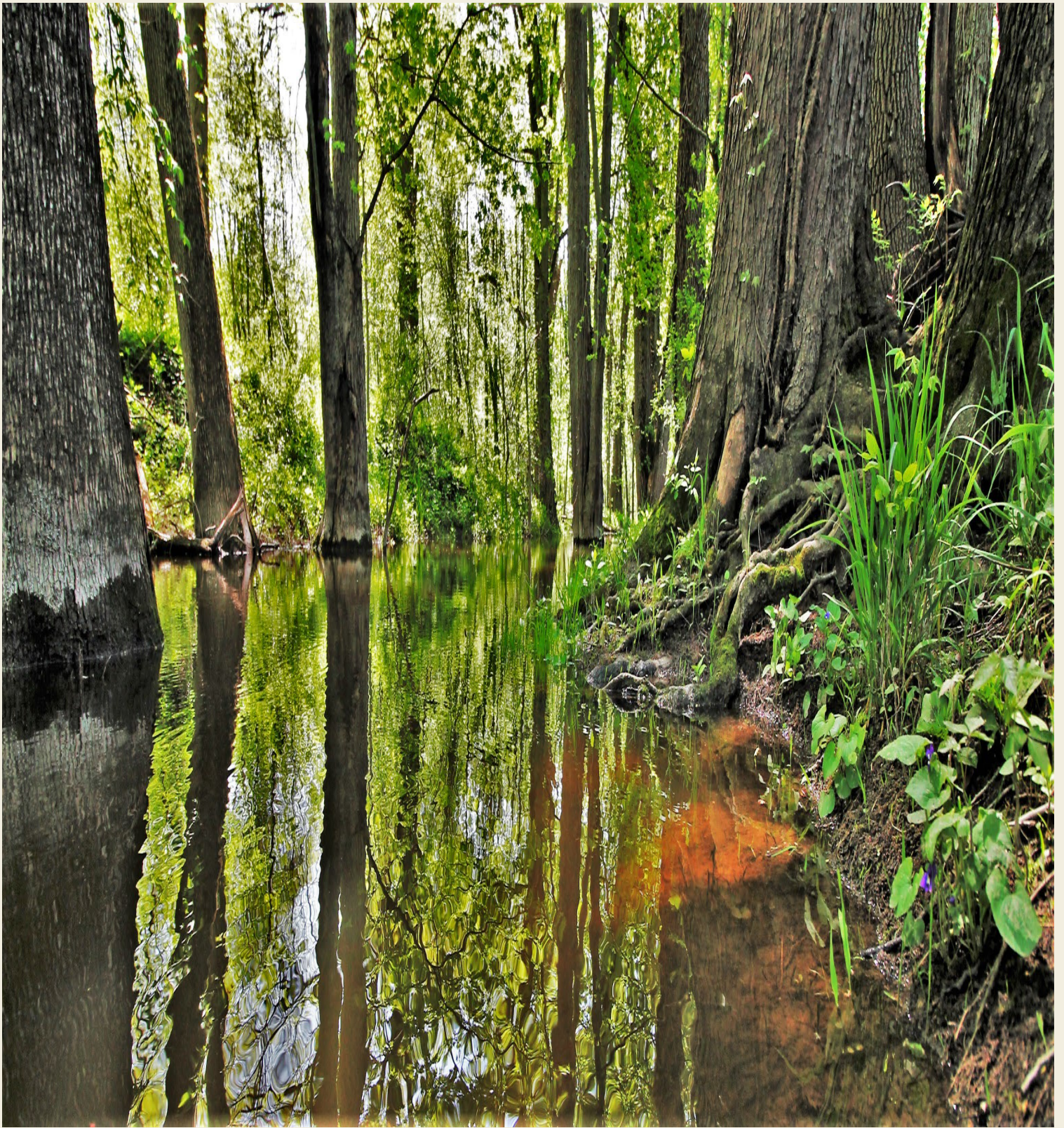
Appendix E: Mission Statement History and Evolution

Mission Statement History and Evolution

OCPRC – discuss if this should be included. We believe it may not add value.

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	Population (2023 Census Estimates)	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 available)	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 Recreational	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/Natural-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 Washtenaw 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.

- 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 766 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”

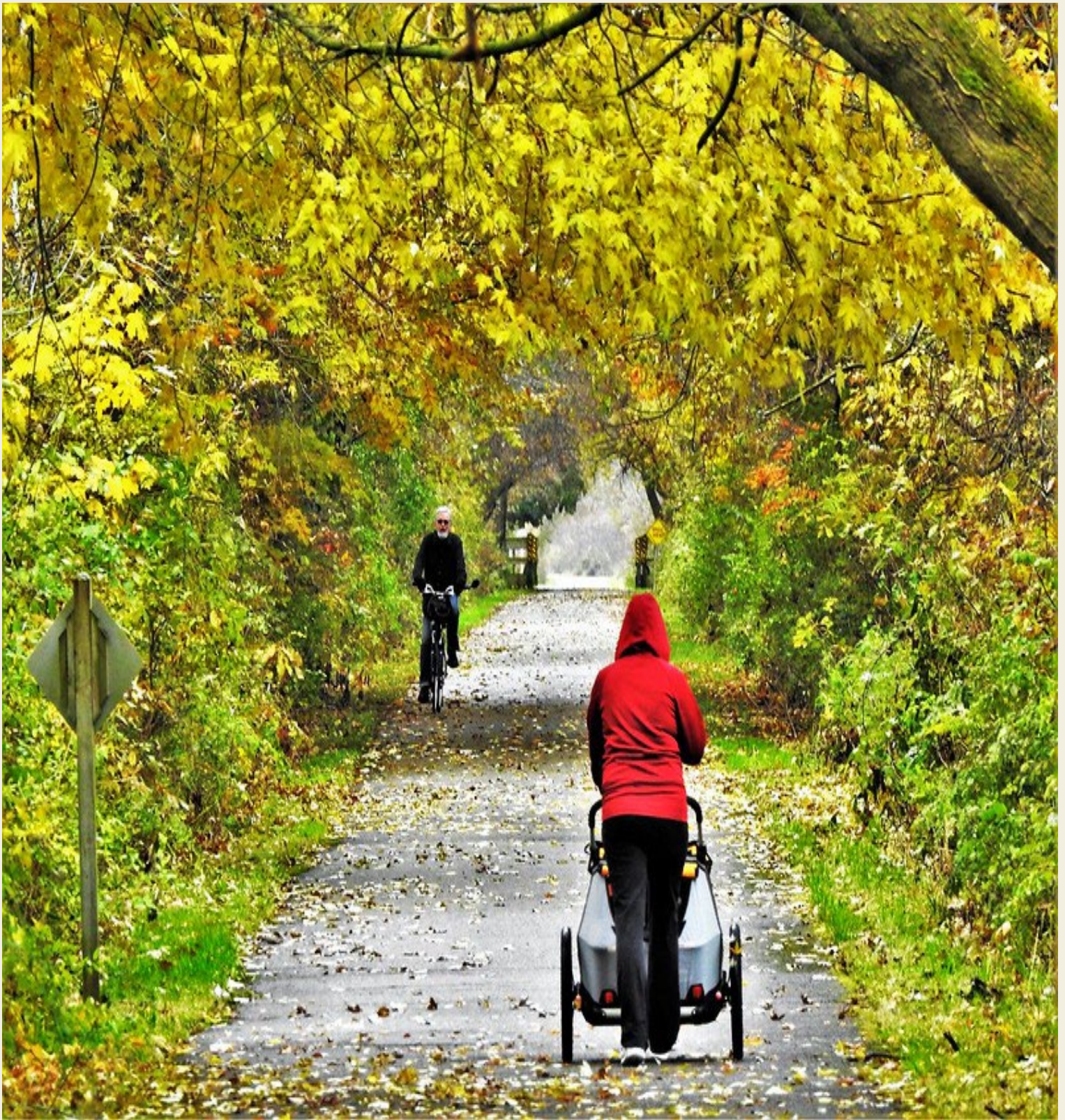
The OCPRC now exceeds this minimum guideline, as Appendix H shows, with 24.4 acres per 1,000 residents.
 - The Strategic Plan surveys (Appendix A and C), Community Benefits Survey (Appendix B), and mobility data (Appendix G) further confirm the rationale stated above that this guideline should be considered 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.

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

- Millage:
 - 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



Appendix H: Capital Investment Analysis