



PORTER COUNTY PARKS & RECREATION

Comprehensive Master Plan



2012



Comprehensive Master Plan

Porter County Parks and Recreation
Porter County Administration Building
155 Indiana Avenue, Suite 304
Valparaiso, Indiana 46383
219-465-3586

April 2012



Parks and Recreation Board

Richard Hudson, President
Rebecca Tomerlin, Vice President
David Canright
Annetta Jones
Ruth Jarnecke
Craig Kenworthy
David Hollenbeck, Park Board Attorney
Walter Lenckos, Superintendent

County Council

Dan Whitten, President
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Laura Blaney
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Jim Polarek

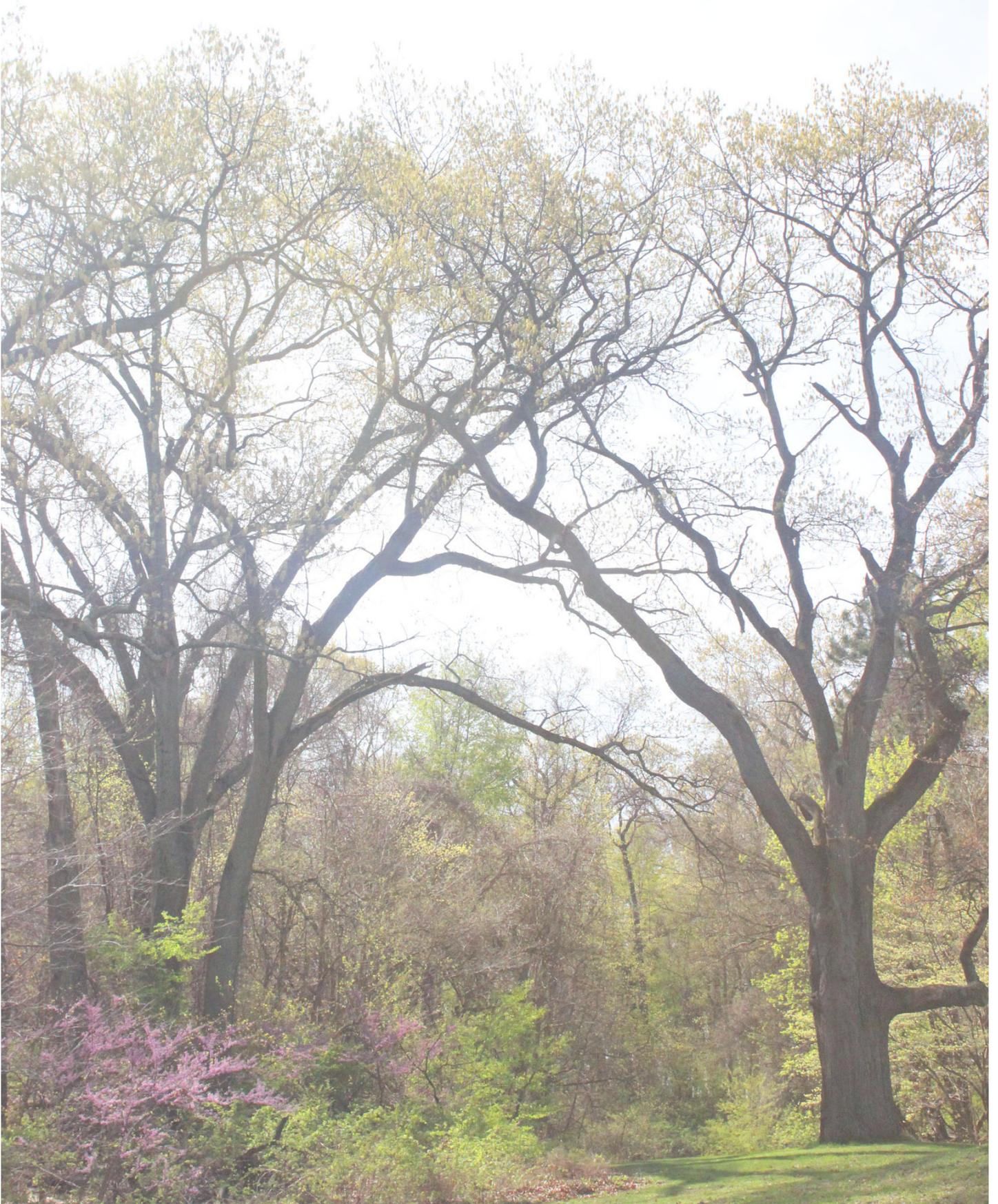
County Board of Commissioners

John A. Evans
Carole Knoblock
Nancy A. Adams

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Executive Summary





Porter County Parks and Recreation 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan

Executive Summary

This plan provides an evaluation, analysis and series of recommendations and associated action items regarding the development, management and administration of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department. Our Park Board convened a committee to identify goals and a process to determine what the most important community needs were and what we could accomplish in the next five years. Those factors included:

- Community input
- Local and regional trends
- Community demographics land use
- Finances
- Current organizational state of the Department and the County

Upon reviewing the land use and demographics of Porter County it became clear to the committee that our county is a unique and beautiful area that consists of varied landscapes, a multitude of businesses and a diverse population. This creates challenges and opportunities for the Department. The Department serves the largest unincorporated region in the state, one of the more undeveloped areas and some of the fastest growing areas as well.

The committee also learned that the needs and desires of the community were as unique as the population itself. A community needs survey was conducted and over 400 responses were received. Based on those responses it was clear that our community believes there are several areas that we should focus on:

- Acquisition of open space for active, passive and future usage
- Acquisition of land for the development of hiking and biking trails that connect our communities and the places that we all visit regularly such as schools, shopping centers, downtowns, libraries, etc.
- Acquisition of open space that protects our local and regional environment, especially our waterways and greenways
- Programs that help to improve our community's health and well-being and our overall quality of life
- Partnerships with other municipalities, schools, recreation agencies and non-profits to maximize our impact and limited budgets

The Department manages and maintains a reasonably diverse set of properties and offers a nice mix of programs to the community. But to achieve the goals in this plan we will need to acquire more properties, include the public in our planning process, develop new programs and review our current financial condition.

It became clear during the development of this plan that we have a unique opportunity to create new ways to generate revenue, partner with different charitable organizations and apply for different funding sources. Each of these funding sources will allow us to grow in new and different directions as an organization.

As part of that growth we also need to address a series of accessibility issues. Many of the Department's programs, parks and facilities are not accessible according to the current federal laws. Included in this plan is a set of recommendations and plans to improve how we serve those in our community that are differently abled.

By following the recommendations and action items in the document, partnering with our elected officials, finding ways to include the community in what we do and leveraging the different professional relationships we have in the County, our department will easily achieve multiple goals in the next five years.

Introduction





Introduction

Plan Author

This plan has been developed, compiled and authored by the Master Plan Committee, appointed by the Park and Recreation Board and chaired by Jim Perkins (in memoriam) and Rebecca Tomerlin. The members of the committee are as follows:

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Jim Perkins | 7. A.J. Monroe |
| 2. Rebecca Tomerlin | 8. Christine Livingston |
| 3. Bob Thompson | 9. Charlotte Read |
| 4. Jonathan Hildebrand | 10. Jenny Orsburn |
| 5. John Shepherd | 11. Matt Pera |
| 6. Paul Shinn | 12. Walter Lenckos |

Plan Completion

This plan has officially been completed and approved via board resolution on April 5th, 2012 by the Porter County Board of Parks and Recreation.

Description of Parks and Recreation Board and Department Staff

The Board of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department is comprised of six appointed individuals per the Indiana State Code. These appointees are named by four different entities: the Porter County Board of Commissioners, the Porter County Council, Judge Mary Harper, and the Purdue University Porter County Extension Agent.

The Superintendent of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department reports directly to this board; a variety of full time staff members (including program development and delivery, maintenance and operations, horticulture, marketing and advertising) report directly to the Superintendent.

A full organizational chart along with associated job descriptions is included as an appendix to this document.

Definition of Planning Area

The planning area for this document is the jurisdictional boundaries of the County of Porter. However, as a planning committee, we realize that many of our current and future facilities will be (and should be) visited by people who do not reside in Porter County. Therefore, we have taken into consideration the fact that many of our parks, programs and services have a “tourist” component to them and we have incorporated that into our planning.

Chapter 1

Goals and Process





Goals and Process

Mission, Vision and Values

In the fall of 2010 the members of the Porter County Park and Recreation Board participated in an all-day retreat to discuss assets, challenges, goals and objectives for the department. The Board recognized that the Department was poised for significant growth, that Porter County was in the midst of a unique economic and political position and that the Department was due to turn in an update to its Comprehensive Master Plan (CMP).

At this meeting the Park and Recreation Board exchanged a host of ideas concerning the Departments direction, priorities and process. It was agreed that the CMP update must be a pivotal point in determining how resources are used, land is acquired and developed, programs are delivered and staff are evaluated. Fortunately the Board also acknowledged that leadership starts with them. Their most significant output from that meeting was an updated and refined mission statement for both the Board and Department.

The Park Board identified the mission for itself and the department as follows:

“To preserve, protect, and manage the natural, cultural and recreational resources within our diverse park system.”

The Department staff then began to use and implement the mission statement in its day to day operations. In that time it became clear that an associated vision was needed to help define the mission statement. In the words of the staff, “the vision statement is what we look like when we fulfill our mission.”

The vision of the Department as identified by the staff is:

“The Porter County Parks and Recreation Board and Department seek to provide access to the natural beauty of our parks and trails while delivering meaningful programs to people of all ages.”

As the master planning process developed, the Department staff felt a strong need to draft a set of values by which the vision is guided. These values are the road signs by which decisions are made, resources are allocated and programs and services are delivered. It is through the daily manifestation of these values that the mission is fulfilled and the organization moves towards seeing the vision become a reality.

Those values are:

- 1. Community ... and the healthy and vibrant quality of life Porter County deserves.***
- 2. Service ... and the passion, respect, and creativity needed to deliver excellence at all times.***
- 3. Dialogue ... and the continual effort needed to understand our community and its needs.***



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4. **Enrichment ... and the importance of improving our parks and programs by fostering a culture of advocacy, education and conservation.**

Process

It is with this Mission, Vision and Values in mind that the development and implementation of the 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan started with. Specifically, the Planning Committee and the Department staff set a goal to develop and create a realistic and “fundable” strategic and master plan that could be accomplished in the next five years; to create a list of action items for the Department that would lead to achievement of the Mission. That pathway and the result of the planning process is the list of priorities and recommendations that conclude this document.

The Department and the Planning Committee assert that each of the recommendations and priorities reflect the Values and bring the Department closer to achieving its Mission. Each of the proposed action items in this document is based on the input of multiple stakeholders and a host of different data points. To create this list of items the Committee broke its process down into several phases that are represented in the timeline below. The different items on the left of the chart represent the multiple areas of input and data the Committee wanted to take into consideration when developing the list of recommended action items.

	May				June				July				August				September				October				November				December				January				February			
	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Demographics																																								
Land Inventory																																								
Current Needs Assessment																																								
Assemble Current Plans																																								
Market Analysis																																								
Public Meeting #1																																								
Our Needs Assessment																																								
Program Plan/Pro-Forma																																								
Public Meeting #2																																								
Draft Version Due																																								
Financial/Cost Analysis																																								
Overlay of Data																																								
Public Meeting #3																																								
Board Approval																																								

*** Additionally, a “filter process” was identified that would be used to determine where an item fell in the priority list. A graphic representation of the filters can be found on Page 10.**



To develop these different filters the Committee collected data from a variety of sources: the Porter County GIS Department, the US Census Bureau, the Indiana Office of Workforce Development, the Northwest Indiana Regional Planning Commission, the Save the Dunes Council, the Shirley Heinze Land Trust, various municipal park agencies, private recreation agencies, etc. A complete list of stakeholders and groups that were consulted can be found in the appendix of this document.

These groups and stakeholders provided the Committee with a wealth of information that framed the priorities, the planning strategy and the process. Once the Committee had collated and collected all of the information and data a set of recommendations and action items emerged. A consultant was then contracted to develop and administer a Community Needs Assessment. This assessment was sent to 2000 households in Porter County with the goal of receiving no less than 400 valid surveys. Additionally, these surveys were intended to represent the demographic make-up of the County. A copy of the assessment can be found in the appendix of this document.

The committee then took the results of the needs assessment, the mass of information already collected and the list of potential revenue sources and began to “filter” the list of action items.

One last community feedback session was held to check the Committee’s assumptions and validate the list of priorities and action items.

Chapter 2

Porter County Overview



Porter County Overview

One of the first sets of data to be collected by the committee was related to the physical make up of Porter County. This includes the landscape, the waterways, the people, the industry and the way that people and goods travel through our region. Of these, one of the more dominant features that affect how we recreate is the land itself.

Natural Features and Landscape



Porter County consists of 521 square miles in Northwest Indiana, approximately 50 miles from the City of Chicago. Water dominates much of the geography, geology and history of the County. Nearly 20 percent (103 square miles) of the County is water, most of it part of Lake Michigan. The remaining surface water drains into either Lake Michigan or the Kankakee River and eventually the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico.

The topography of Porter County was formed through the long and slow process of Glaciation. While not dramatic in relief, the land is marked by the transition between three different regions that are associated with different glacial plains. These plains are the Chicago Lake Plain, the Wheaton Morainal Plain and the Kankakee Till Plain.

The northern quarter of the County resides within the Chicago Lake Plain. Glaciers north of the Valparaiso Moraine melted forming Lake Michigan and the prevailing winds developed what we now know and love as the Indiana Dunes.

The Wheaton Morainal Plain follows the Valparaiso Moraine in a large sweeping arc to the south of the Lake Michigan shoreline. This plain consists of primarily clayey till, sandy and loamy till, sand, gravel, lake clay, silt and alluvium. Generally the deposits are between 50 and 200 feet thick.

The third and final plain is the Kankakee Till Plain. This plain locally surrounds the Kankakee River and is an out-wash plain formed by variable gradient, variable volume and the variable velocity of glacial floods throughout history. It is predominantly sand and gravel.

Each of these three areas is associated with one third to one quarter of the County; the Lake Plain is generally considered the Dunes Area, the Morainal Plain in the Central part of the County is referred to as the Moraine area and the Kankakee Plain in the Southern section of Porter County is known as the Kankakee area.

Each of these areas sits on top of the Valparaiso Moraine. This is the terminal moraine that surrounds the southern Lake Michigan basin. It is a band of high hilly terrain made up of glacial till and sand and reaches elevations of near 300 feet above Lake Michigan and is nearly 17 miles wide at one point. The Moraine, which was



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formed under glacial Lake Michigan during the Crown Point phase of the Wisconsin Glaciation, was so thin that it was mostly restrained by dolomite rock layers in the Lake Michigan Basin. Where the glacier stopped moving southward glacial till and sand was deposited throughout the region, creating the current hills of the moraine.

In present day Porter County, all of this is important because of the effect the geologic and geographic history has on drainage, transportation corridors, construction and development suitability and general topography. These factors all play a major role in the way that open space and recreation space are utilized and developed in Porter County.

The county drains its rainwater and storm water into two different directions. The northern half of the county's water flows into Lake Michigan via the Little Calumet River, its Salt Creek tributary and the Burns Ditch. This water then makes its way through the Great Lakes system and eventually the Atlantic Ocean.

The Southern portion of the county generally drains through an extensive array of manmade field tiles and drainage ditches that eventually flow into the Kankakee River, the Mississippi River and finally the Gulf of Mexico.

It is this divide that helped to develop what is known today as the Calumet Plain and the Calumet Region. This area is thought to be named after the Calumet River that is for the most part a slow, low and sluggish river. Because of the areas proximity to Chicago and what developed as a series of transportation thoroughways the far northern part of Porter County is home to several large heavy industrial facilities such as BP, ArcelorMittal and US Steel.

To the south, in the Valparaiso Moraine area the rolling hills are the predominant feature. Due to the relative dryness of this area it became much easier to traverse through this part of the region versus the Calumet area or the Kankakee area.

Each of these factors plays a part in how, where and why people recreate in Porter County. In general, the northern third of the county where urban development has occupied much of the usable land recreation usage is dominated by people using beaches and shorelines for recreation. In the central third of the county recreation users enjoy a wide variety of recreation opportunities due to the connectedness of transportation corridors, the proximity to multiple outdoor recreation opportunities and the diversity in landscape types.

The southern third of the county is dominated by farm land and flood prone areas due to the ongoing struggles with drainage and the high quality soil prized by farmers. It is understood that the each of these factors must be taken into account when developing action items and priorities related to outdoor recreation and open space.



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Man-made, Historical and Cultural Features

Porter County is blessed with a wide variety of cultural and historical features in addition to the array of man-made features that make our area what it is. These features include things like transportation corridors, a thriving and growing art community, a respect for the history of our area and an extensive array of recreational opportunities.

Much of the impact that human development has had on our county and the Northwest Indiana region is due to its funneling effect of multiple transportation corridors and pathways. Thus we find a vast network of railways (both active and abandoned), multiple federal and state highways, the Port of Indiana, a regional airport and the Kankakee River all within the boundaries of Porter County.

This network provides both an opportunity and a challenge to trail and park development in the area. It is an opportunity in the fact that these corridors (such as abandoned rail lines) provide well-travelled routes that could be transitioned into trails. The opportunity also exists to knit together the extensive stream and Blueways system into a comprehensive series of access points to parks and open space. Additionally, the array of roadways and highways that weave through Porter County provide us with the opportunity to engage tourists and travelers through the area.

The challenge lies in the fact that highways, railways, bridges, utilities and other such corridors also cause the landscape to be broken up, segmented and zoned in such a way that a comprehensive network of trails, pathways and open spaces appears to be a daunting task. Add onto that the fact that most, if not all, of these corridors cause pedestrian crossings to occur at grade level with quickly moving tractor trailers or freight trains and the picture looks even gloomier.

Fortunately, area planners, elected officials and the community as a whole have realized the conflict that can be caused by these different uses. The Porter County Parks Department has the opportunity to be a partnering agency in the connecting of these different travel corridors.

Likewise, the Department has the opportunity to leverage several cultural and historical aspects of the County. Porter County boasts a myriad of local and regional historical sites including the Memorial Opera House, the Porter County Museum, the Westchester Museum and the historic area of Furness, to name only a few.

Similarly this opportunity exists within the context of cultural sites in the County such as the local art galleries and theaters, the downtown areas of several communities, and the Expo Center. Currently, the local tourism bureau is working to develop the County Expo Center as the second "anchor" for tourism in the County. This is important to the Parks and Recreation Department because it means people will be travelling to and from the Expo Center past several of County owned sites and potential sites.

These different cultural and historical opportunities provide additional recreational choices to Porter County residents, neighboring county residents and tourists. These sites also provide meaningful and entertaining destinations for current and potential pathways and trails. Each of these different sites and agencies can also be considered a potential program partner as they reach a similar yet distinct market compared to what the Park and Recreation Department has traditionally served.



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Finally, while each of these agencies and destinations are primarily partners and provide an added value to the agency, it must be mentioned that they are also competitors. There is a finite amount of financial resources within Porter County to support cultural and historical sites and programs. There are a limited number of weekends to hold festivals and events. And there are a limited number of families that are able to enjoy and participate in each of these programs. It is for these reasons that careful marketing, program development and agency collaboration will be critical to the Department's success in the future.

Porter County Demographic Profile

Porter County is a region that is rich in cultural diversity and history, dating back to its settlement in 1830s. Porter County communities are continuing to experience the growth pressures that have been evident in the entire metro Chicago region for many years, with the County population growth up nearly 12% since 2000 alone. Porter County has had an influx of development over the last decade. Along with housing development comes vital economic development that is changing the face of the communities while they work to maintain and improve the integrity of their character and image. Like many areas in the Midwest, this development is reducing the amount of land dedicated to agriculture, and as a result, is making permanent changes to the character of the rural areas.

Porter County is approximately 272,000 acres, in size, making it the 28th largest county of the 92 counties in the State of Indiana. Valparaiso, the county seat, is located near the center of the County. Other incorporated areas include the City of Portage and the Towns of Burns Harbor, Chesterton, Dune Acres, Hebron, Kouts, Ogden Dunes, Porter, and Pines.

Porter County's population of 164,343 makes it the 8th most populous county in the State of Indiana. The 12% growth over the past decade exceeds the growth of many areas in the Chicago metropolitan area. In the Northwest Indiana region, Porter County is the fastest growing county, while Lake (2.4%) and LaPorte (1.2%) have slowed in their growth significantly.

Population Distribution

The distribution of the population within Porter County shows that while a majority live within incorporated municipal areas, approximately 42% live in unincorporated Porter County, making Porter County Parks and Recreation the primary recreation provider for a large part of the overall population.

Age

The U.S. Census Bureau estimated the 2010 median age in Porter County to be 38.4 years old, an increase of 2.1 years just in the past 10 years since the 2000 Census. Preschool and school-age children under the age of 19 take up approximately 27.1 percent of the population, a number that has remained fairly consistent since the 1990 Census took place. The largest increase since 2000 has been in the 60-64 age brackets. This, coupled with the steady increases shown in ages 55 and up, illustrates the aging population of the baby boom generation.

According to the same Census Bureau data in 2010, the largest types of employers in Porter County are



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manufacturing, retail trades, government, health care and social work and accommodations and food service. Of these health care and social assistance saw the greatest 5 year increase in employment (55%) while government saw the largest decrease (24%). Additionally, agriculture (26%) and management of companies (29%) saw statistically significant increases while construction (-18%) and wholesale trade (-27%) also saw significant decreases. Also of note, arts, entertainment and recreation (-16%) saw a sharp drop off in the last five years.

This data may indicate that manufacturing, travel and tourism, government and health care will continue to be the largest employers in the county. This lends itself to the fact that individuals will continue to desire recreation opportunities during traditional dates and times: weekends, evenings and holidays. Additionally, the most recent data available for Porter County shows a small uptick in employment. Of the total labor force in September 2011 (80,865) 6,128 individuals were categorized as unemployed. This is a decrease of 464 individuals since September of 2012. This equates to a 7.6% unemployment rate for Porter County and may indicate that a certain portion of recreation programs should or could be offered for free or a reduced rate.

Chapter 3

Community Needs and Vision





Community Needs and Vision

One of the most important components to the development of this plan is input from the community and the perceived needs of our residents. To fully understand those needs, the committee set out to perform a multi-step community needs assessment. The assessment involved first meeting with staff, stakeholders and other committee members to identify key issues and topics to be addressed within the plan. Next, facilitate a public input session to determine whether or not each of these issues had traction and to identify if there were other issues and topics that the committee needed to address. The third step was to administer a comprehensive community needs survey. This survey would consist of focus groups, stakeholder interviews and finally a valid and reliable random sample survey.

The intention of the process was to raise issues and topics that had either been identified in previous plans yet were unresolved, and to identify new planning priorities that seemed to be rising in importance. These priorities would then be refined by testing them against a random sample of Porter County citizens. Those issues and needs that were identified as priorities through the random sample would then be elevated to the next step – financial sustainability.

Public Meeting

During the early parts of the committee's work, an hour long public input session was held at Sunset Hill Farm County Park (a newspaper article covering the meeting can be found in the appendix). The goal of this session was to solicit input on several key issues that the department staff and committee had identified. The committee also anticipated hearing about other issues that previously had not been discussed. Lastly, the session was intended to help frame the upcoming focus group meetings and stakeholder interviews as part of the rest of the community needs survey.

A list of the ten key issues that were discussed at the meeting can be found in the appendix. The format of the meeting was rather simple and straightforward. Each issue was written on a large piece of paper that was taped to the wall of the meeting room. The facilitator introduced each of the topics and briefly explained what it meant. Each of the dozen or so participants at the meeting was then invited to write a comment or idea concerning that particular topic on the sheet of paper. They were instructed to write their strong feelings related to the particular issue or issues that they chose.

Afterwards, each meeting participant was given three colored stickers. They were then asked to go back to each of the pieces of paper and place one (or more) of their stickers next to the comments and feedback with which they most strongly agreed. They were asked not to place stickers next to items that they had themselves written.

A list of the ten issues that were presented to the group can be found in the appendix. Below each item are the comments and words that participants wrote on the pieces of paper. Next to several of these comments are asterisks. The asterisks represent the number of stickers that people placed next to the comments they felt most strongly about.



Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Following the initial public input session, the committee hired a consultant to aide in developing and administering a statistically reliable and valid community needs assessment. The committee hired ETC Institute of Olathe, KS and began working with Mr. Ron Vine, Vice President. The committee and Mr. Vine developed an agreement and process that consisted of:

- Initial meeting between the committee and Mr. Vine to review materials, survey instruments and project goals and objectives
- Developing a draft of the focus group and stakeholder questionnaires as well as the community needs survey
- An on-site visit that included focus group interviews with the planning committee, the department staff, a group of passive recreation advocates, a group of active recreation advocates and a group of program partners.
- Delivery and administration of a community needs survey to 2000 random households in Porter County
- Collection and assessment of all data
- Report and presentation by Mr. Vine to the committee that included a “top 25” list of recommendations based on the data from the survey and the initial focus group and stakeholder interviews.

** Copies of the interview scripts, notes and the community needs assessment can be found in the appendix*

Community Needs Survey

The results of the community needs survey were very positive and reinforced many of the committees assumptions while highlighting some needs that were not anticipated; survey respondents rated the condition of the County Parks either good or very good more often than not if they had visited them. Respondents also were clear that one of the largest barriers to them not visiting our parks or participating in our programs was that they didn’t know what was offered or didn’t know where our facilities were located. Also of note for the committee was the fact that so many respondents identified trails and pathways as such an important part of the Porter County Parks Department can do for the community.

Chapter 4

Supply Analysis



Supply Analysis

The Porter County Parks Department manages nearly 500 acres. Of those 500 acres nearly half is within Sunset Hill Farm County Park. An overview of the county owned parcels is as follows:

Overview and Descriptions of Properties

Sunset Hill Farm County Park



Sunset Hill Farm County Park is a hub of activity in Porter County. The park offers a variety of events and festivals, hiking trails, camps, field trips and fitness programs year round. Whether it is a hiker or a birdwatcher, a runner or a gardener, a parent with active kids or an enthusiast of antique farm equipment, there is something for everyone at Sunset Hill Farm County Park.

The park began as a fully functional farm and private residence, purchased by Colonel Robert Heffron Murray and his wife, Sue, in 1934. The original property consisted of 80 acres. Within a year of living there, the Murrays had 1,000 chickens and sold eggs and broilers to local residents. During its most productive period, the farm also produced 400 gallons of milk a day.

The property continued to grow, until it reached its current size of 238 acres. After Colonel Murray passed away in 1972, his estate donated the land to Porter County. Now, thousands of people enjoy Sunset Hill Farm County Park every year thanks to his generous legacy.

Brincka Cross Gardens



The Brincka Cross Gardens property was developed by an artist, and it is clear that this was his masterpiece. Bill Brincka was a professor at the Art Institute of Chicago, and his creativity can be seen throughout the gardens. Bill and his companion, Basil Cross, spent more than 40 years developing and nurturing four acres of landscaped gardens, which are surrounded by another 21 acres of pristine woodlands.

Bill and Basil lived in the Frank Lloyd Wright-inspired home on the property until Bill's death, in 2001. After Basil passed away in 2006, Porter County Parks and Recreation purchased the property to create a public park. Our staff, lead by horticulturalist Matt Brown, have since reclaimed many of the original gardens, clearing overgrowth and invasive plants to reveal the beauty of the landscape that was cultivated with such care by the original owners.

The gardens boast 400 different types of hostas, 450 varieties of daffodils, 25 kinds of crab apple trees, 40 cultivars of ornamental grasses and 25 varieties of forsythias. And that's just for starters. You have to come out to the gardens and experience them for yourself to truly understand how special this property truly is.

Dunn's Bridge County Park



Porter County Parks and Recreation purchased the 180-foot-long bridge and surrounding three acres in 1994, and undertook an award-winning restoration that helped land the bridge on the National Register of Historic Places. The origin of Dunn's Bridge has become the stuff of legend.

Most historians agree that the bridge was built by a farmer named J.D. Dunn, whose property was bisected by the Kankakee River. But beyond that, the facts are a bit murky. Some say the bridge was built in the mid-1890s using steel beams salvaged from the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Others contend

the bridge was built using pieces of the original Ferris Wheel, which premiered at the 1893 World's Fair, and was dismantled after 1904 World's Fair.

The bridge offers the only designated public access to the Kankakee River in Porter County, allowing fishermen and paddlers to launch their boat here and enjoy the beautiful natural surroundings. Those who enjoy fishing can cast for walleye, bass, crappie, bluegill and northern pike, among others.

The bridge is an exceptional piece of Porter County history, and serves as an access point to some of the most unique environmental features in the area.

Calumet Trail



This 9.1-mile trail is the perfect place to walk, run, bike, cross-country ski, or snowshoe. The grassland prairie habitat is home to a huge variety of wild-flower and bird species that add to the picturesque surroundings.

The trail crosses through the eastern portion of the Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, and many beautiful spots are a short distance away, including several Lake Michigan beaches, the Calumet Dune Interpretive Center, Mount Baldy and Cowles Bog. It also skirts the south edge of Indiana Dunes State Park, which has 16.5 miles of hiking trails, beautiful beaches, a birding observation tower, and more.

Brookdale County Park

Brookdale County Park is approximately 65 acres and is highlighted by a mid-sized man made pond that is about 4 or 5 acres and gentle rolling slopes in the eastern half. A master plan was developed for the property in 2011 and the land is currently being leased by a local farmer. The near-term plans for the property are included in this document.

Pine Township Property

The Pine Township property was acquired from the state's Department of Corrections. It is approximately 50 acres and is currently being farmed. It is nearly all flat farm land at the moment with a small stand of woods on the property.



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County Home Property

The County Home property is owned by the Porter County Commissioners but is maintained by both the Parks and Recreation Department and the Maintenance Department. Several years ago multiple renderings were developed to create a master plan for the property but no final decision was made. There are currently no plans for the property.

Chapter 5

Current Inventory of Plans and Related Projects



Current Inventory of Plans and Related Projects

It is important to note at this point in the document that a myriad of other local and regional plans were consulted and referred to during the Planning Committee's work. Some of the more frequently referred to plans include:

- NIRPC's 2040 Comprehensive Regional Plan
- Porter County's Smart Growth Plan
- Valparaiso Parks Department Master Plan
- Indiana Dunes Tourism Marketing Plan
- Northwest Indiana's Quality of Life Council Annual Report
- Porter County United Way's County Needs Assessment
- NIRPC's 2011 Ped, Peddle and Paddle Plan
- Porter County Parks Department's 2007 Comprehensive Master Plan
- The Trust for Public Lands work entitled Health Benefits of Parks
- * *Porter County United Way and Porter County Community Foundation's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness (Released in late 2011, and will be included in later revisions of this Master Plan)*

Each of these documents and the work that went into them influenced the Committee's process and planning in some way or another. The Committee's intention was to weave the objectives and goals of each of these groups into its own document rather than reinventing the wheel in several cases.

Chapter 6

ADA Compliance and Evaluation





ADA Compliance and Evaluation

ADA Compliance is an important aspect in the design, development and management of the Porter County Parks Department properties and programs. The Department staff as well as the Master Planning Committee recognizes that there are many opportunities for the Department to make improvements and serve our constituents more effectively.

The following section summarizes a Department self-evaluation of our ADA requirement compliance as well as offers some opportunities to make improvement and upgrades in the next several years. It is important to note that all upgrades and improvements recommended or discussed at any point in the document include the use of ADA requirement compliant features.

For the purpose of this document and in the immediate future, the Department has asked our Park Manager, Matthew Howton to act as our ADA compliance officer. Mr. Howton can be reached through our business office in Valparaiso, IN.

Self-Evaluation

Sunset Hill Farm Buildings and Structures

In general the park achieves some compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Several of the ramps, handrails, doorways and handles are at the correct height, slope, width and proper interior door opening force. In addition the public restroom includes several compliant features such as grab handles, toilet, sink and restroom stall turn around space.

The campground at the park includes several compliant features as well: grills and picnic tables, paved paths and a drinking fountain at less than 36" in height.

The main parking lot for the park is designed for 85 cars. It has the required four (4) required accessible parking spaces with one (1) van-accessible spot. All spots have the proper signage, are the proper sizes, and locations.

There are some paved paths around a small portion of Sunset Hill Farm that can be ADA compliant. They are the proper width. However, there are areas along that paved road that are also used as a path where the slope is greater than recommendations. Due to the cost of fixing the slope it is not feasible.

During special events held at the park picnic tables are used that are ADA compliant and are located on pavement that is accessible. Most events are laid out along paved surfaces that can be easily accessed. The park has access to a small wagon that can safely hold a wheelchair for giving wagon rides at events and field trips. Additionally, ADA portable toilets are provided at all events along with the use of the restrooms. Finally, special cut mulch is used on the parks playground to reduce fall impacts and stability issues.

Dunn's Bridge County Park

The property does not currently include a length list of ADA compliant features. There are two accessible parking spaces but the necessary signage is absent. In addition there are no van accessible parking spaces.



Brincka Cross Gardens

Currently none of the facility can be considered ADA compliant.

Calumet Trail

Currently none of the existing trail can be considered ADA compliant.

Potential Improvements and Upgrades

The Park Department staff has developed a proposed list of improvements that can be accomplished during the timeframe of this document. A summary of that list is included below. A more comprehensive document containing costs, potential funding sources and level of need can be found in the appendix of this document.

General

The Department should consider several ADA complaint upgrades to its general operations and business. These include: making sign language interpreters available for public meetings, programs and events, provide written materials in large print or braille, ensure that the new web page is ADA compliant, and provide printed material in alternate languages such as Spanish.

Sunset Hill Farm Building and Structures

The opportunity exists to install new hand rails installed in the restrooms and to upgrade the restroom fixtures to auto flush, auto turn on faucets, and auto turn on hand driers. Several of the pathways in the campground, around the restroom and leading to the picnic shelters should be re-evaluated for proper slope, construction material and lighting. Additionally, special events should consider using the paved main parking for all ADA needs.

Dunn's Bridge County Park

The Department should work to improve parking and pathways at the facility. Signage at the facility should also be installed to denote ADA compliant features. Lastly, the Department should consider upgrading and adding amenities that are fully compliant such as picnic tables, grills, restrooms, fish cleaning stations and a boat dock.

Calumet Trail

The parking Lot in Michigan City needs the ADA symbol repainted and van sign installed. The Department also needs to continue to work with the Porter County Commissioners, the Planning Commission, the National Lakeshore, the Indiana Dunes State Park and NIPSCO to upgrade the trail and make the entire facility universally accessible. This should include repairs and upgrade to the trail and all necessary site amenities.

Brincka Cross Gardens

The Department should consider a host of upgrade and improvements during the revitalization and development of this property and its buildings. Included in the recommendations are upgrades to the residence including ramps, upgraded restroom fixtures and improved doorways, an improved parking area and universally accessible trails and pathways throughout the park.

Currently the Parks Department does not have any mechanisms to communicate ADA compliance or information to the public. As part of master planning process the committee has made several recommendations to remedy this problem including having suggestion boxes located at all of the park locations and the main office, have a website feedback page, and have department contact information clearly posted in all parks near the suggestion boxes (e-mail, phone, USPS address).

**Section 504 of Rehabilitation Act of 1973 compliance form with original signatures can be found in the Appendix of this document.*

Chapter 7

Financial and Capital Improvement Plan





Financial and Capital Improvement Plan

The following information is representative of the work that the Committee and the Department staff undertook to understand the financial complexities and resources available. The sections below review the information that was retrieved and collected from a variety of sources. The intention of this section is to illuminate the opportunities and challenges that the Department faces in regard to the funding and finances associated with our operations. As part of this plan the committee has made several recommendations regarding financial metrics. These recommendations can be found in the corresponding section.

Assumptions

Several assumptions have been made regarding the financial future of the department during the development of this document and the associated action plan list. To understand these assumptions it is first important to recognize the different means by which the Department is funded. There are three primary funds upon which the Department relies on to operate and deliver its programs and services: the General Fund, the Operating Fund and the Commissioner's CEDIT fund. Additionally, the Department has the opportunity to utilize both its own Capital Fund and the County Cumulative Capital Development Fund. Each of these funds and their current usages are described below.

During the development of this Master Plan the Department staff and the Committee assumed several different scenarios:

1. Due to the current property tax base there will be no near term increase in the General Fund. In fact, the Department staff should be prepared for a decrease at some point possibly.
2. Based on the current growth trajectory of the Department there is a significant opportunity to increase the percentage of the overall operating budget that comes from earned income. For this scenario to become reality the Department and Board must develop a fee model that is acceptable to the users and participants.
3. Due to the potential relationship with key partners the Department is poised to realize a significant increase in the overall percentage of the operating budget that comes from charitable and grant related funding. The caveat with this scenario is that additional funding will be required for grant writing, administration and relationship management.

General Fund

The General Fund is the fund by which most of the Department's daily operations and maintenance depend on. In 2012 the Department has budgeted for more than 50% of its revenue to come from the General Fund. Based on estimates from the State of Indiana, the current political environment and the upcoming election it is nearly impossible to predict exactly which way the total tax levy will be in the coming years for Porter County. It is difficult to imagine though that the amount of funding received will decrease in the next five to ten years. Even though the Department does not anticipate any reduction in this fund the expectation is that the ratio of revenue coming from the General Fund will decrease over time.

Operating Fund

The Operating Fund is really a misnomer and sometimes leads to confusion. Operating in this case does not refer to a fund that simply provides funding for the operation of the Department. Rather the fund is the result



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of earned income that the Department receives through program fees, sponsorships, events, rentals and general day-to-day operations. In 2012 the Department has budgeted for less than 15% of its revenue to come from the Operating Budget. The current development of the Department's business plan, strategy and tactics lend itself to an increased share of the overall revenue coming from the Operating Fund.

Community Economic Development Income Tax (CEDIT)

CEDIT dollars come to the Department through the County Board of Commissioners. CEDIT monies may be used for anything that can be legally done through any of the other County funds as long as it is a part of the counties capital improvement plan.

Cumulative Capital Development (CCD)

The CCD fund has traditionally been used to fund costs such as trucks, vehicles, roads, right-of-ways, etc. The Department may consider requesting disbursement from the CCD fund to cover certain land acquisitions, as a match in grant applications or as part of the Department's Capital Improvement Plan.

Capital Fund

A capital fund is a reserve of monies that are set aside to fund future spending on assets. Porter County Code allows for the capitalization of fixed assets and infrastructure assets. Additionally, the Department has established for it a Capital Fund (Fund 128). Currently there is not a definitive mechanism by which the Capital Fund is replenished. Nor is there an established Capital Improvement Plan within the Department. In the last several years money received from the cash farm lease of several Department owned properties has been used to replenish the Capital Fund.

Capital improvement plan

A Capital Improvement Plan, or CIP, is a short-range plan, usually four to ten years, which pinpoints capital projects and equipment purchases, provides a planning timeline and identifies funding opportunities. The CIP provides a link between the Department, the Master Plan and the department's annual budget.

Having a CIP can aid the Department in a variety of ways including: allowing for a systematic evaluation of all potential projects at the same time, ability to manage and consolidate projects to reduce costs, serve as a communications and economic development tool, focus on the Department's infrastructure while ensuring the efficient use of public funds, opportunity to identify synergy's among other departments and inform them of the Department's priorities.

Typically a CIP includes a list of impending capital projects or equipment to be acquired, the proposed projects and equipment ranked in order of preference, the funding for the projects and a timetable for the projects.

The intent of the Department's Capital Improvement Plan is to address the current needs of our facilities and programs and to anticipate the Department's needs in the near future. The CIP is based on staff input, perceived park development and anticipated available funding. The Department and Master Plan Committee hope that the proposed CIP is reflective of the Community Needs Survey and the resulting recommendations and action items.

The proposed CIP can be found as an appendix to this document.



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Porter County Parks Foundation

The Foundation has the opportunity to play an increasingly important and significant role in the development and growth of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department. The mission of the Porter County Parks Foundation is

1. To render assistance and counsel to the Porter County Park and Recreation Board in promoting and developing sound principles and policies for park and recreation facilities and activities
2. To solicit, collect, provide and receive funds and/or property, and to receive gifts and bequests, for securing and maintaining facilities and programs for parks and recreation conducted by the Porter County Park and Recreation Board
3. To educate the citizens of Porter County and surrounding areas with reference to the needs, programs and activities of the Porter County Board of Parks and Recreation.

Through that mission the Foundation can raise dollars that the Parks Department technically and legally cannot. The draft CIP and financial plan as part of this document suggests there is a significant gap in funding between what the County can bear and the financial resources needed to achieve agreed upon operational goals. A model that might be used to bridge that gap is the Public Private Partnership.

A Public-Private Partnership (PPP) is a contractual agreement between a public agency (federal, state or local) and a private sector entity. Through this agreement, the skills and assets of each sector (public and private) are shared in delivering a service or facility for the use of the general public. In addition to the sharing of resources, each party shares in the risks and rewards potential in the delivery of the service and/or facility. Examples of local PPP's would be the regional transportation systems in Lake and Porter County, the Indiana Dunes Tourism Welcome Center and the soon to be dining establishment at Indiana Dunes State Park. Each of these provides an example where the government entity is able to reduce costs and improve the level of service provided while engaging a worthwhile private entity in the community.

The staff of the Porter County Parks Department strongly supports the concept of partnering with the Foundation to establish specific revenue goals associated with charitable giving. It has been recommended that the Foundation establish some mechanism by which reasonable and attainable goals are set, action items be developed and specific strategies adopted to achieve those goals. Each of these should be developed in conjunction and collaboration with the Park and Recreation Board as well as the Parks and Recreation Department leadership.

Fixed Costs

The Department is currently developing a mechanism to determine fixed costs. The attached excel spreadsheet (included in the appendix) attempts to delineate between variable and fixed costs. Currently the Department does not use fixed costs when developing pricing models. The hope is that through the adoption of this plan a fixed cost rate will be included in all program planning and pricing.

Cost Recovery

Full cost recovery means recovering or funding the full costs of a project or service. In addition to the costs directly associated with the project, such as staff and equipment, projects will also draw on the rest of the organization. For example, adequate finance, human resources, management, and IT systems, are also integral



components of any project or service.

The full cost of any project therefore includes an element of each type of overhead cost, which should be allocated on a comprehensive, robust, and defensible basis

Cost Recovery Alternative Definition

Cost recovery is defined as the recovery of some or all of the costs associated with the provision of a program or service. Historically, parks and recreation departments have implemented user fees as a means to recover a portion of the costs to deliver programs and services. Revenue sources such as grants, donations, fundraising, and sponsorships have most recently been identified as other effective means contributing to cost recovery efforts.

Bastian, Billie M., "Cost recovery plans: Are they being used as a financial planning tool in parks and recreation departments?" (2003). UNLV Theses/Dissertations/Professional Papers/Capstones. Paper 398. <http://digitalcommons.library.unlv.edu/thesesdissertations/398>

Ratios

The Department seeks as part of its financial plan to determine a target fixed cost ratio.

The variable cost ratio is useful in setting pricing policy so as to arrive at the optimum price for a product. The calculation can be done on a per-unit produced basis or by totals over a time period as long as the numerator and denominator are used.

For example, if variable costs per unit of a product are \$55 and the product sells for \$100, the variable cost ratio is 55%. The difference between the selling price and variable costs is known as contribution margin (CM); this amount is the contribution toward meeting fixed costs. The variable cost ratio can also be computed as (1 - CM ratio).

Retrieved from: <http://www.investopedia.com/terms/v/variable-cost-ratio.asp#ixzz11LtMFUQ4> on 2/3/12.

Using current estimates the Department has a fixed cost ratio of somewhere in the 70-80% range. The Department seeks to develop a long range goal of something closer to 50%.

Land costs and maintenance costs

User safety, satisfaction and community pride are to a great extent related to the condition of its parks, recreation and open space. Proper maintenance will increase the useful life of a park or facility and reduce operational expenses. Parks operation and maintenance expenses often represent half of a total department's annual budget. Maintenance costs can often be forecasted by estimating acreage for each maintenance level. Per acre maintenance costs are based on the National Recreation and Park Association maintenance labor standard of 118 staff hours per acre per year.



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Per acre maintenance cost = average hourly wage (\$10/hr) + 75% for equipment and supplies.

Retrieved from http://www.prm.nau.edu/prm423/cost_analysis_lesson.htm on 2/3/12

PC Parks and Rec currently has approximately of 270 acres (SSHF, Brincka, Dunn's and Calumet Trail).

Using the following formula and inputs at \$10/hr + 75% = \$17.50 x 118 x 270 acres = \$557,550 in recommended maintenance costs for the Porter County Parks Department.

The total Operations and Maintenance budget for 2012 = \$61,150 + \$117,500 in full and part time salaries. That creates a grand total OandM budget of \$178,650.

The difference between the NRPA recommendation and the Porter County total is \$378,900, representing a shortfall of nearly 150%. This large discrepancy should be addressed in the recommendations and action items of the Planning Committee.

Chapter 8

Needs Analysis





Needs Analysis

A great many factors are involved in determining exactly what level of outdoor and recreation need exists within a service area. In 1983 the National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) published a book by Dr. James D. Mertes and Dr. James R. Hall entitled *Park, Recreation, Open Space and Greenway Guidelines*. Since then the publication has proven useful and flexible in its interpretation of park and open space needs for a variety of communities and municipalities across the country.

The text identifies a basic classification system for parks along with a recommended amount of acreage on a population ratio basis; so many acres of parks per 1,000 people residing in the service area.

The classifications are as follows:

- Mini-Park: Has a service area less than $\frac{1}{4}$ mile radius and approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acre per 1,000 people
- Neighborhood Park: Has a service area between $\frac{1}{4}$ and $\frac{1}{2}$ mile radius, with population up to 5,000, and is 15 plus acres which equals 1.0 to 2.0 acres per 1,000 people
- Community Park: Has a service area with a 1 to 2 mile radius and have 25 plus acres, which equals 5.0 to 8.0 acres per 1,000 people
- Regional/Metropolitan Park: Has a service area of one hour's driving time and have 200 plus acres, which equals 5.0 to 10.0 acres per 1,000 people
- Regional Park Preserve: Has a service area of one hour's driving time and have 1,000 plus acres. 80% of this land would be reserved for natural resource management and conservation and 20% for recreational development. The acres per 1,000 people for a regional park preserve would vary widely depending on the property available.

Since its publication the classification system and its method for determining benchmarks has been adapted, adopted and changed to suit the needs of the service area. In the case of Indiana, the Department of Natural Resources has developed a Level of Service (LOS) process that takes into account the specifics and nuances of each local service area.

Indiana's method of determining benchmarks is based on the following classification system:

- Local recreation acres: Land owned by municipal, township, and county governments, and land privately owned but open for public use
- Regional recreation acres: Land owned by either State or Federal governments for public recreation use
- Statewide recreation acres: Total of all public recreation land statewide, owned by all the entities in the other categories

According the State Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) that is scheduled to be published later this year (2012) Porter County has an excess of Regional and Statewide recreation acres but lacks Local recreation acres by more than 500 acres. This assessment is not new nor is it surprising due to the incorporation of the National Lakeshore and Indiana Dunes State Park into the document. What it does reflect though is that once you leave the far northern portion of the county there is a considerable lack of public recreation areas in Porter County, primarily in the unincorporated areas.



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This lack of outdoor public recreation space is reflected in the public input and the community needs assessment that the Department has conducted. According to both of those methods of data collection the southern part of the county and the unincorporated areas are under served and feel the need for the County to acquire additional land for both outdoor recreation and quality of life reasons.

Chapter 9

Recommendations and Priorities



Recommendations and Priorities

This lack of outdoor public recreation space is reflected in the public input and the community needs assessment that the Department has conducted. According to both of those methods of data collection the southern part of the county and the unincorporated areas are under served and feel the need for the County to acquire additional land for both outdoor recreation and quality of life reasons.

Recommendation #1

- 69% of households use Porter County parks.
- Usage of parks and facilities for all providers in the county is 94%.
- The County Parks and Recreation Department should establish a goal of 79% park usage to be achieved in the next 10 years.

Priorities

- PCPRD will develop a consistent and comprehensive marketing plan that includes delivery of program brochures to all resident households.
- PCPRD will develop a community and corporate sponsorship program for Department events that aims to bring together non-traditional user groups for the purpose of Park functions and events.
- PCPRD will seek to develop new programs and services based on community and user feedback that addresses recreation needs not currently served adequately within out service area.

Recommendation #2

- 58% of households use Sunset Hill Farm County Park.
- Only an additional 11% of households use the Calumet Trail, Dunn's Bridge County Park, and Brincka Cross Gardens.
- The County Parks and Recreation Department should establish a goal of 25% usage of Parks (other than Sunset Hill Farm) to be achieved in the next 10 years.

Priorities

- PCPRD will investigate and identify potential canoe livery partners to deliver services on the Kankakee River.
- PCPRD will continue to pursue all marketing and communications efforts as mentioned in recommendation #1.
- PCPRD will develop and construct a parking area and associated trail ways system at Brincka Cross Gardens thus enabling more consistent and reliable programming to be delivered.
- PCPRD will continue to make improvements to the residence at Brincka Cross Gardens enabling the location to provide a more improved experience to visitors.
- PCPRD will continue to work with the Porter County Commissioners, the Porter County Planning Department, the National Park Service, Indiana Dunes State Park and other associated agencies to continue the repair, reengineering and reconstruction of the Calumet Trail. This includes additional site amenities, new interpretive signage and additional directional signage to the trailheads.
- PCPRD will acquire and install additional site amenities to Dunn's Bridge County Park. This will include

a new fishing pier and boat launch, a picnic shelter, fish cleaning station and rest rooms.

- PCPRD will identify at least one additional property in the next five years to develop and improve based on community feedback and input.

Recommendation #3

- 26% of households rate the conditions of County operated parks that they use as excellent.
- The national benchmark is a 31% excellent rating for the condition of local parks that they use.
- The County Parks and Recreation Department should establish a goal of a 31% excellent rating for parks that are used by residents in the next 10 years.

Priorities

- PCPRD will establish a level of service standard for all parks. This includes site amenities, furnishings, trail and park appearance, lighting and landscaping.
- PCPRD will develop a capital equipment replacement program as outlined in the Action Item document in the appendix of this document.
- For all parks and properties the PCPRD will develop a site management and operation plan.
- PCPRD will ensure that any additionally acquired properties have sufficiently identified maintenance and operational funding.

Recommendation #4

- 67% of households today use walking/hiking and biking trails of all parks and recreation systems in the County and 48% use nature trails.
- 78% of households indicate a need for walking and hiking trails, 56% a need for biking trails, and 65% for nature trails.
- The County Parks should work with other agencies increasing usage to walking/hiking and biking trails to 72%, and nature trails to 55% in the next 10 years.

Priorities

- PCPRD will continue to pursue all marketing and communications efforts as mentioned in recommendation #1.
- PCPRD will develop and deliver at least one new program a year focused on walking/hiking and nature trail usage and self-guided interpretation on our current trails.
- PCPRD will identify at least two new program partners to encourage and facilitate the use of walking/hiking, biking and nature trails in the next three years.
- PCPRD will direct approximately one third of its budgeted acquisition dollars towards hiking/walking and nature trail opportunities.
- PCPRD will focus its land acquisition efforts on opportunities that connect existing communities, existing pathways and trail systems, community resources (parks, libraries, hospitals, post offices, shopping centers, etc.) and park lands.

Recommendation #5



- 31% of households indicate that “I do not know what is being offered” as a barrier to usage of County operated parks.
- The national benchmark is 23%.
- The County Parks should set as a goal to reduce to 23% the percentage of households who list “I do not know what is offered” as a barrier in next 10 years.

Priorities

- PCPRD will execute the marketing and communications plan as described in this document. The Department will continue to deploy press releases, public service announcements, newspaper advertisements and the semi-annual program guide.
- PCPRD will develop and implement a road side billboard campaign, a new department web site and an enhanced direct marketing campaign using social media and direct mail.
- PCPRD will identify specific markets and user groups within our service area and develop marketing strategies tailored to them.
- PCPRD will develop metrics to measure the effectiveness of marketing efforts and use that data to determine resource allocation.

Recommendation #6



- 88% of Resident households in Porter County would support additional open space being acquired.
- Improved for passive usage, improved for both passive and active usage, and left undeveloped are the 3 actions respondents would most support.
- The County Parks and Recreation Department should be actively involved in open space acquisition over the next 10 years.

Priorities

- PCPRD will dedicate approximately one third of its land acquisition dollars to open space acquisition in the next five years.
- PCPRD will identify specific partners with which to develop financial relationships that allow for more acquisition and conservation of open space within our service area.
- In collaboration with the Board’s Land Acquisition and Development Committee, PCPRD will identify specific target areas for acquisition based on community input, development growth, environmental protection, connectivity options and watershed protection.

Recommendation #7



- There is strong support for improving Porter County's system of streams and creeks.
- Provide environmental protection and develop a network of walking/hiking and biking trails are much supported.
- The Porter County Parks and Recreation Department should concentrate acquisition efforts along streams and creeks.

Priorities

- The Park and Recreation Board's Land Acquisition Committee will develop a land acquisition plan and/or policy that take into account the priorities identified in the community needs assessment (property that connects amenities, increase in trail opportunities, new park property in Southern Porter County, land that is primarily for passive usage, etc.).
- The Land Acquisition Committee will identify watersheds that are most in danger of being impacted by development and growth within the county.
- PCPRD will work with local and regional conservation partners to identify best practices and locating and acquiring land along streams and creeks.

Recommendation #8



- 48,048 households indicated having a need for walking and hiking trails, 40,175 households have a need for nature trails, and 34,409 have a need for biking trails.
- The Porter County Parks and Recreation Department should be actively involved with developing an interconnected system of trails in the County.

Priorities

- PCPRD will focus its acquisition dollars on pathway and hiking/biking systems that connect to other trails and amenities. Examples of this include the Dunes Kankakee Trail, the Kankakee River Trail, the Calumet Trail and the trails connecting Sunset Hill Farm to the new Porter Hospital and Rogers Lake-wood Park in Valparaiso.
- PCPRD will develop a strategy to create a county wide network of connected trails.
- PCPRD will identify strategic partners that allow for more collaborative efforts in trail connections.

Recommendation #9



Improve physical health and fitness is the #1 benefit respondent households feel they may receive from parks, trails, and recreation facilities and programs.

Make Porter County a more desirable place to live, protect water quality, preserve open space, and develop connected trails are among next highest benefits.

Porter County should focus on these benefits over the next 10 years in concert with land acquisition and other similar efforts.



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Priorities

- PCPRD will develop and deliver at least one new wellness program each year based on community input and feedback.
- PCPRD will identify new partners that allow us to deliver new and engaging wellness and healthy living programs that our constituents find useful and worthwhile.
- During the land acquisition process PCPRD will take into account the opportunity for wellness and health programming in new park areas as well as its impact on environmental concerns, quality of life, trail connectivity and open space preservation.
- PCPRD, in conjunction with the Board's Land Acquisition and Development Committee will develop a rubric to score an acquisition based on the above criteria.

Recommendation #10

- Nearly 80% of respondent households favor Porter County Parks and Recreation partnering with cities, schools and non-profits in the development of youth and adult sports fields and programs.
- Only 5% of respondent households do not favor partnering.
- Over the next 10 years, Porter County Parks and Recreation should establish partnering relationships for the acquisition, funding and management of open space for youth and adult sports fields and programs.

Priorities

- PCPRD will identify a partner to test the 3P model with in delivering active recreation particularly in the southern part of Porter County.

Recommendation #11

- Respondent households favor a combination of fees and taxes for funding programs and activities.
- Respondents favor the highest percent of tax funding to go towards people who are disabled, older adult programs, and youth programs.
- Fee should be established through a combination of user fees and tax revenues in providing programs and activities.

Priorities

- In coordination with the Park and Recreation Board's Budget and Personnel Committee, the Department will develop a cost recovery model based on the community needs survey results, future budget forecasts and our fixed costs.
- The Department will identify what our fixed and variable costs are to help determine what programs should be offered for free or at a discount as opposed to those that should be associated with a fee.

Recommendation #12



- 87% of respondent households would be willing to fund with tax dollars a number of improvements to the County park system.
- In particular, over the next 10 years, the County Parks and Recreation Department should concentrate efforts on providing environmental protection, develop a connected system of trails, acquire land for trails, and acquire land to preserve open space.

Priorities

- In conjunction with local and regional environmental agencies, conservation agencies and recreation providers PCPRD will identify areas of particular concern that should be considered for acquisition and trail development.
- PCPRD will develop a list of no less than five new ways to connect its own set of pathways, trails, parks and amenities and will also identify five ways to connect our amenities and facilities to other area recreation amenities and service partners. These connections will include: the Dunes Kankakee Trail, the Kankakee River Trail, the Calumet Trail, the Porter Hospital Trail and the inter-urban trail.

Recommendation #13



- Upgrading/improving Sunset Hills Park remains important, and with more than 50% of household respondents using the park, on-going attention is important.
- The Parks and Recreation Department should pursue developing an environmental education center at the park, and look at providing trail connections to the new Porter Hospital and Rogers Lakewood Park.

Priorities

- PCPRD will work with the County Board of Commissioners, the County Council, the Porter County Parks Foundation and other area agencies to build a new administrative and program delivery structure in the next two years.
- PCPRD will develop a comprehensive proposal to connect Sunset Hill Farm County Park to both the new Porter Hospital and Rogers Lakewood Park.
- PCPRD will develop a restoration, recreation and land management plan for Sunset Hill Farm County Park based on current usage, anticipated future usage, community input and financial opportunities.

Recommendation #14



75% of respondent households were very or somewhat supportive of using interest revenue to acquire, maintain, and develop parks, trails, and facilities. Only 9% were not supportive. The County Parks and Recreation Department needs to be responsive to the strong community support for pursuing this funding option.



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Priorities

- PCPRD will execute a communications plan that clearly articulates the benefit and return on the community's investment in parks and recreation infrastructure.
- PCPRD will regularly conduct a community needs survey to determine what the priorities and attitudes towards recreation and parks are in the community.
- PCPRD will annually conduct a review of its capital and strategic plans to ensure that we effectively communicate what our needs and gaps are to the County's elected officials.

Recommendation #15

- Over 80% of respondent households indicated they felt it was very important or somewhat important to fund improvements to the Porter County Parks and Recreation System Compared to Other Priorities.
- Over the next ten years, the County Parks and Recreation Department needs to continue to be responsive to the importance placed on funding parks and recreation improvements.

Priorities

- PCPRD will continue to publicize our plans and needs to both the public and our elected officials.

Chapter 10

Implementation





Implementation

It is intended that the recommendations and action items in this document will serve as guideposts and not a strict timeline or specific pathway. There is no right order or absolutely correct way to satisfy each of the recommendations. Instead, by following up on each item and understanding its interconnected process with other recommendations the Committee and Staff feel that success will be easily achieved.

Early on in the process the Committee discussed the fact that government and non-profit agencies in the Northwest Indiana have developed a myriad of plans that were never fully followed up on or implemented. To that point the Committee discussed ways that after the work of developing the list of recommendations was finished the final task would be to create an implementation plan. The three items that were discussed to ensure actual implementation and eventual growth of the Department were:

- The formation of an implementation team
- Regular contact and a real connection with our County elected officials
- A sincere effort on the Superintendent's part to develop and foster relationships with local and regional stakeholders

The implementation team is intended to act as a resource for the Staff and the Board. This group should be comprised of members of the Planning Committee, the Board, the Staff and potentially other members the community. The group should include people that are capable of taking somewhat vague and/or opaque ideas (like our list of recommendations) and develop a list of concrete and measurable steps that lead to the achievement of those goals. The group also should have a specific timeline associated with it. In other words members should be clearly instructed as to how long of a commitment is expected of them to participate in the group.

It is also recommended that members of this group have relationships with or are capable of developing relationships with our local elected officials. In several of the recommendations it is noted that communication and dialogue with the County Council and Commissioners will greatly assist in the achievement of the Department's goals. In addition it is important that the Department serve as the conduit between what members of the community need from their Parks Department and what resources are available to serve those needs.

Lastly, the Committee discussed the point that many of the recommendations and results of the survey are focused on the ability of the Department administration building long term relationships with other agency officials and colleagues in the county. It is the intention of the Superintendent to identify and follow through on specific actions that will lead to additional partnerships and continued leveraging of resources. Examples of these partnerships include work with local service groups (Kiwans, Rotary, and Lions), program partnerships with other recreation providers (4-H, Boys and Girls Club, local Recreation Departments) and continued outreach to local corporations and charitable foundations. Each of these types of organizations represents an opportunity to increase the number of people who visit our parks, participate in our programs and financially support our efforts.

Each of these three tasks in conjunction with the recommendations of the committee and the associated



Porter County Parks and Recreation 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan

action items should be and will be reviewed on an annual basis. It is the intention of the Department staff to incorporate this document and its priorities into a regular performance and goal setting process. In other words the staff (in concert with the Park Board and the Implementation Team) will review this document, update it, address concerns and ideas, re-establish goals and priorities and ensure that it is still feasible and reasonable, on a yearly basis. The idea of incorporating this document into the Department's annual performance and goal evaluation is twofold: the master planning process becomes less onerous because it is done more often and the goals are much more achievable because they are reviewed much more often.

Finally, below the reader will find an action item list that identifies specific tasks and projects including their start date, proposed completion date, estimated cost, site or department and assumed funding sources. The full intention of the Department staff, Park Board, Implementation team and Planning Committee is that each and every one of these items will be completed by April 15, 2017. Any feedback, comments, thoughts or ideas concerning priorities, tasks, process or otherwise may be directed to the Superintendent of Parks and Recreation. Thanks for reading.

Year Start	Year End	Site	Action	Cost Estimate	Potential Funding Sources
2012	2012	Brincka Cross	Parking Lot	\$60,000	CEDIT
2012	2012	Dunn's Bridge	Site amenities	\$5,000	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Sunset Hill Farm	Raise the Barn campaign	\$3,000,000	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2013	2013	Sunset Hill Farm	South field development	\$175,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2013	2013	Brincka Cross	Fencing	\$75,000	CEDIT
2013	2013	Dunn's Bridge	Landscaping	\$10,000	CEDIT, Operational Funds
2012	2013	Marketing	Complete competitive market analysis	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Marketing	Complete marketing metric study	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Marketing	Community and corporate sponsorship program	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Operations	Level of service standards developed	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Operations	Site management and operations plans	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Operations	Development of Land Acquisition policy	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Program Delivery	Identification of two new walking/hiking program partners	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Program Delivery	Development and delivery of one new wellness program	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Operations	Development of cost recovery model	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2013	Operations	Development of fee structure based on fixed costs	N/A	Operational Funds
2012	2014	Brincka Cross	Residence upgrades/repairs	\$35,000	CEDIT, Operational Funds
2012	2014	Brincka Cross	Garden campus pathways	\$40,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2013	2014	Brookdale	Parking area	\$80,000	CEDIT
2013	2014	Brookdale	Trailhead and trail design and development	\$25,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2014	2014	Sunset Hill Farm	New picnic shelters	\$100,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2014	2014	Brincka Cross	Barn Improvements	\$30,000	CEDIT, Operational Funds
2014	2014	Calumet Trail	Trail amenities & interpretive signage	\$10,000	CEDIT, Operational Funds
2014	2014	Dunn's Bridge	Boat ramp and small craft dock upgrades	\$25,000	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds

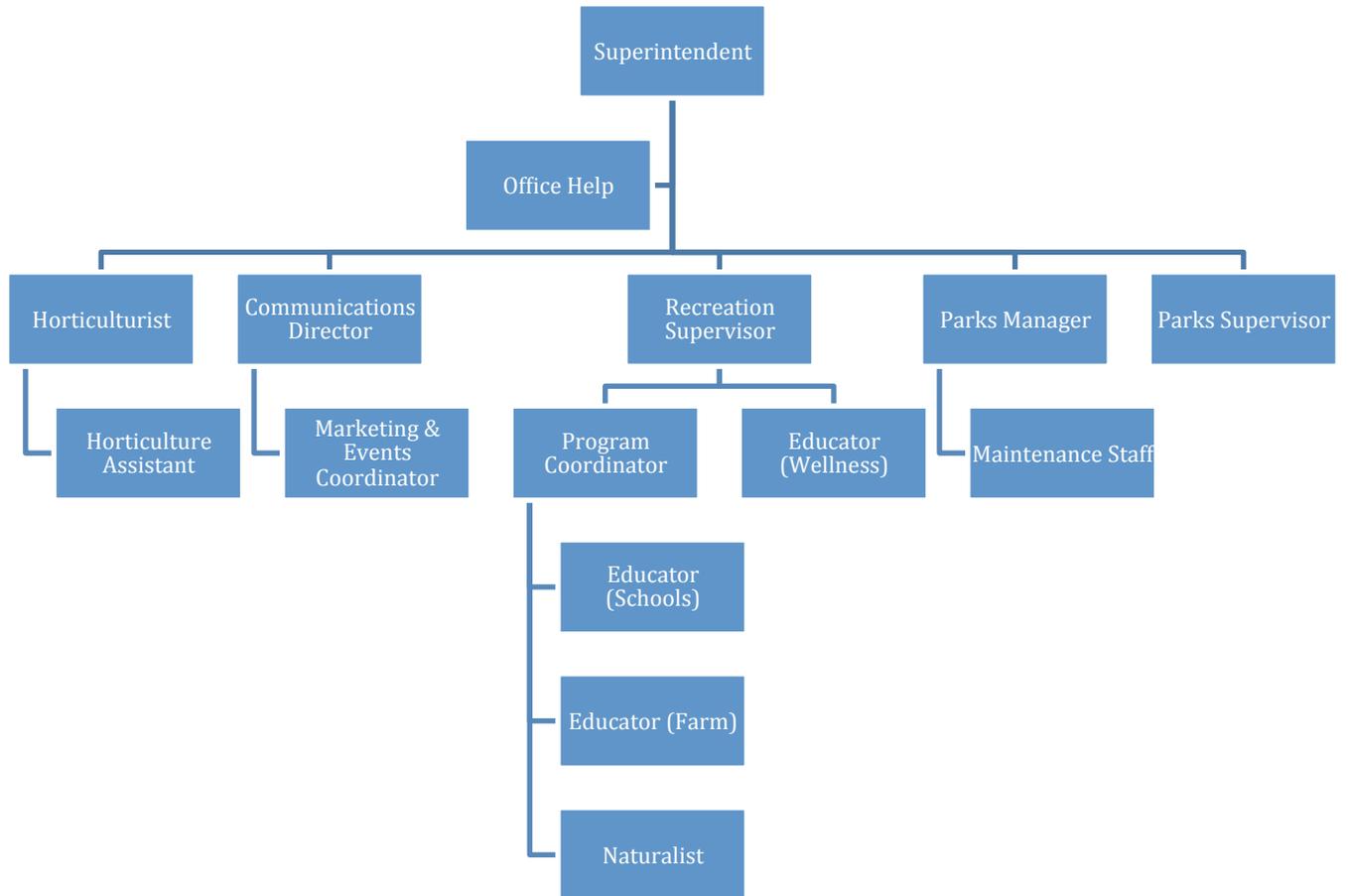


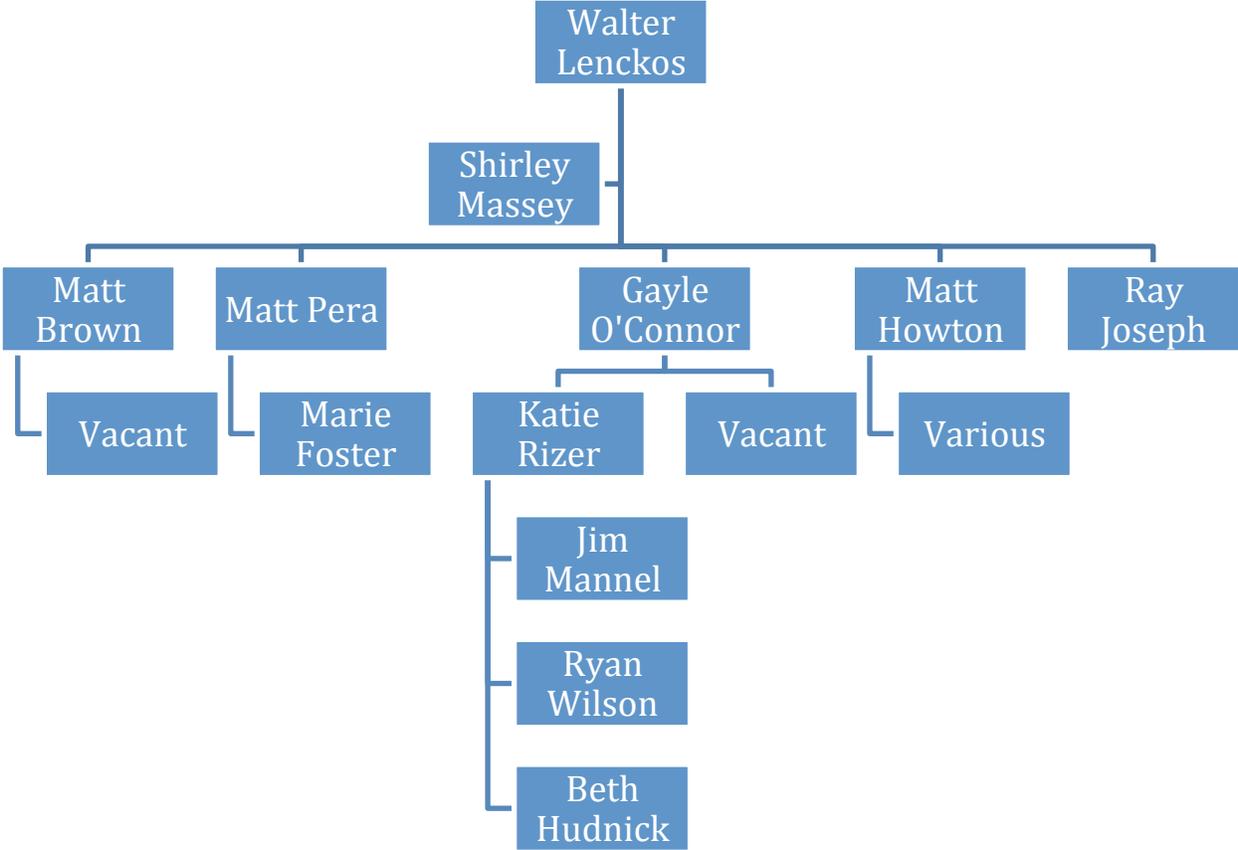
Porter County Parks and Recreation 2012 Comprehensive Master Plan

2014	2014	Dunn's Bridge	Campground development	\$25,000	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2013	2014	Operations	Identification of critical streams, creeks and woodlands	N/A	Operational Funds
2013	2014	Program Delivery	3P Partners Model for active recreation	N/A	Operational Funds
2013	2015	Sunset Hill Farm	Trail connection to Porter Hospital	\$1,000,000	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2013	2015	Brincka Cross	Woodland campus trails & development	\$130,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2014	2015	County Home site	Park plan and design	\$15,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2015	2015	Sunset Hill Farm	Meadow rehabilitation	\$75,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2015	2015	Dunn's Bridge	Restroom development	\$50,000	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2012	2016	Calumet Trail	Trail development and repair	\$8,000,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2013	2016	Sunset Hill Farm	Trail Development	\$250,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2014	2016	Sunset Hill Farm	Trail connection to Rogers Lakewood	\$1,000,000	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2015	2016	Pine Township site	Park plan and design	\$15,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2016	2016	Sunset Hill Farm	Amphitheater renovation	\$150,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2012	2017	Various	Equipment purchase & replacement	\$240,000	Capital fund, grants, operational funds
2013	2017	Sunset Hill Farm	Campground improvements	\$125,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2015	2017	Calumet Trail	Parking lot improvements	\$50,000	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2015	2017	Brookdale	Active use field development	\$5,000,000+	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2016	2017	Brincka Cross	Welcome center construction	\$600,000	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2016	2017	Pine Township site	Additional acquisition to join adjacent properties	\$1,000,000+	CEDIT, Grants, Fundraising, Operational Funds
2014	2017	Various	Complete dog park study and/or assessment	\$5,000	Operational Funds
2014	2017	Various	Complete ice rink study and/or assessment	\$5,000	Operational Funds
2015	2017	Operations	Update to community needs survey	\$15,000	Operational Funds
2013	2017+	Dunes Kankakee Trail Corridor	Land acquisition and trail development	\$100,000/year	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2013	2017+	Kankakee River Corridor	Land acquisition and trail development	\$100,000/year	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds
2013	2017+	Southern Porter County	Land acquisition and park development	\$100,000/year	Grants, CEDIT, Operational Funds

Appendix

Organizational Charts





Grant Providers

Recreation Trails Program

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers this program. Applications may include land acquisition and/or development, maintenance, and ethics education of multi-use trails. The program will provide 80% matching reimbursement assistance for eligible projects. The minimum grant amount is \$10,000 and the maximum is \$150,000. Applications for the current cycle are due by May 1st.

Land & Water Conservation Fund

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) administers this program. Applications may consist of land acquisition and/or outdoor recreation facility construction or renovation. The program will provide 50% matching reimbursement assistance for eligible projects. The minimum grant amount is \$10,000 and the maximum is \$200,000. Applications for the current cycle are due by June 1st.

Lake Michigan Coastal Program

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources (IDNR) –Lake Michigan Coastal Program (ILMCP) administers this program. The program will provide one to one matching reimbursement assistance to eligible projects. The minimum grant is \$5,000 and the maximum is \$150,000 (Land Acquisition only). A call for applications will be announced later in the year.

Safe Routes to School

The Federal Safe Routes to School (FSRTS) program was established in the Federal Transportation Bill – Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). The new program seeks to enable and encourage children in kindergarten through eighth grades (K-8) to walk or bicycle to school, thereby promoting increased physical activity. The FSRTS program is multi-faceted and requires that applicants address non-infrastructure activities before; during and after infrastructure improvements have been made.

Transportation Enhancement (retrieved from

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/transportation_enhancements/legislation/
on 2/3/12)

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Highway Authority (FHWA) administers the Transportation Enhancement (TE) program. Eligible projects include: facilities for pedestrians and bicycles, safety and educational activities for pedestrians and bicyclists, acquisition of scenic easements and scenic or historic sites, landscaping and other scenic beautification, historic preservation, rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities, preservation of abandoned railway corridors and archaeological planning and research.

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality

The Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) apportions FHWA CMAQ funds to each county in an air quality non-attainment (or maintenance, if attainment has been achieved). Funds are received on the basis of population and the severity of the air quality problem. CMAQ projects are transportation projects which, if implemented, will result in lower emissions from internal combustion engines. Separate allocations are made to the combined Lake/Porter County area and to LaPorte County.

Surface Transportation Program

Each year the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) makes apportionments of FHWA Surface Transportation Program (STP) contract authority to each Urbanized Area for highway improvement projects. The area within the Chicago Urbanized Area is apportioned STP Group I (large Urbanized Area) funds; the area within the Michigan City/LaPorte Urbanized Area is apportioned STP Group II (small Urbanized Area) funds.

List of Assets

Sunset Hill Farm County Park		
Structures	Size (feet)	Approx Age (as of 2011)
Picnic Shelters		
1 Hickory Shelter W/Concrete Floor	20 x 30	17
2 Pine Shelter W/Concrete Floor	20 x 30	17
3 Campground Shelter W/ Fireplace W/Concrete Floor	20 x 40	17
4 Gazebo W/Concrete Floor	50' Radius	9
Restroom Facilities		
1 Lower Restroom W/Offices in rear (remodeled 1994)	25 x 40	17
2 Upper Restroom W/ Storage in rear (remodeled 1994)	35 x 45	17
3 Privies located in Campground (primitive)	10 x 20	17
Out Buildings		
1 Large Steel Machine Shed	30 x 120	61
2 Smaller Steel Machine Shed	30 x 90	61
3 Corn Crib (wood)	25 x 40	66
4 Machine Shed W/Shop Area (wood)	30 x 160	66
5 Granary Building (all wood)	25 x 40	66
6 Chicken Coop (wood)	30 x 75	66
7 Old Park Maintenance Building (wood)	20 x 80	66
8 New Park Maintenance Building (2008) (steel)	48 x 80	3
9 Two Small Storage Sheds (wood)	10 x 10 each	4
10 Large Storage Machine Storage Building (steel)	40 x 60	61
11 Three Bay Garage (steel)	20 x 40	61
Resident Houses		
1 Superintendent's House	45 x 55	66
2 Park Manager's House (35 E 700 N)	25 x 45	57
3 Park Manager's One Car Garage	20 x 30	57
4 Park Manager's Small Shed (Storage for Holiday Light items)	10 x 20	17
Misc. Buildings and Structures		
1 Gatehouse (wood)	10 x 15	17
2 Interpretive Center (wood)	25 x 45	8
3 Campground Well Shelter (wood)	8 x 8	17
4 Playground Equipment		17
5 Split-Rail Fence	5271 feet	17
6 8 Gates (3 wood, 5 steel)	14 foot each	1994/2004
7 Sorghum Shack W/Fireplace	15 x 20	19
8 Sawmill Shelter	25 x 30	12
9 Amphitheater W/ Stage	30 x 35	18
10 Windmill	45 Foot	2
11 Land	240.0 Acres	
12 Bridge over spill-way at Sunset Hill Farm County Park		
Brincka-Cross Gardens (25 Acres)		
1 House		44
2 Wooden Barn		
3 Small Garden House "Tea House"		
4 Plants and Trees		
5 Land	25.0 Acres	
Dunn's Bridge (3 Acres)		
1 Dunn's Bridge		
2 Land	3.0 Acres	
Calumet Trail (9 Miles)		
Property On County Line Rd and 1500 N. (65 Acres)		
1 Land	65.0 Acres	
Property On County Line Rd 50 W and 919 N		
1 House and Out Buildings		47
2 Land	67.0 Acres	

Capital Improvement Plan

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Equipment						
PTO Utility Tractor	\$45,000					\$45,000
Chipper		\$35,000				\$35,000
Batwing Mower			\$16,000			\$16,000
Zero turn mower				\$24,000		\$24,000
Utility vehicle					\$28,000	\$28,000
Service truck						\$40,000
Maintenance/Development		\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$100,000	\$500,000
			\$25,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$100,000
Land Acquisition						
Sunset Hill						
Raise the Barn	\$600,000					\$600,000
South Field		\$150,000				\$150,000
Picnic shelters			\$100,000			\$100,000
Meadow				\$75,000		\$75,000
Amphitheater					\$150,000	\$150,000
Trail Development						\$250,000
Campground	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$50,000	\$25,000		\$125,000
No-Can-Do Pond	\$25,000	\$25,000				\$25,000
Brincka Cross						
Fencing		\$75,000				\$75,000
Residence		\$10,000	\$25,000			\$35,000
Garden pathways	\$5,000	\$25,000				\$30,000
Woodland campus		\$15,000	\$15,000	\$25,000	\$25,000	\$80,000
Barn						\$30,000
improvements						\$600,000
Welcome center			\$30,000.00	\$600,000		\$850,000
Calumet Trail						
Site amenities			\$10,000			\$10,000
Parking Lot				\$25,000		\$50,000
						\$60,000
Dunn's Bridge						
Landscaping		\$10,000				\$10,000
Site amenities	\$5,000					\$5,000
Dock & ramp			\$25,000			\$25,000
Campsite			\$25,000			\$25,000

ADA Compliance Recommendations

Sunset Hill Farm County Park				
Buildings and Structures				
Time-line	Non-Compliant Area	Cost	Funding	Priority
2012	Restrooms hand rails updates	\$500	General Fund	Medium
2012	Upgrade restroom to hands free	\$2,500	General Fund	Medium
2013	Improve drinking fountain pathway	\$1,000	General Fund	Low
Campground and Picnic Shelter areas				
2014	Parking lot upgrades	\$20,000	Grant	Low
2014	Improve pathways to privies, fire pit, & shelter	\$2,000	Grant	Medium
2013	Privy improvement or replacement	\$30,000	Grant	Medium
2013	Hickory Shelter walkway improvement	\$2,000	Grant	Medium
2014	Pine Shelter walkway improvement	\$2,000	Grant	Low
Festival Parking Lot				
2015	Installation of ADA compliant pavers	\$100,000	General Fund	High
Pathways and Trails				
2017	Development of ADA compliant nature and hiking trails.	\$200,000	Grant	Low
Playground				
2013	Upgrade ground surfacing	\$2,500	General Fund	Low
2013	Upgrade pathway from parking lot to playground	\$2,000	General Fund	Low
2013	Install ADA compliant play features	\$15,000	General Fund	Low
Dunn's Bridge				
Time-line	Non-Compliant Area	Cost	Funding	Priority
2014	ADA compliant parking including updated signage and marking	\$10,000	General Fund	Medium
2012	Removal of parking blocks	\$0	General Fund	Medium
2014	Improve boat ramp and drive up	\$15,000	Grant	Low

Year	Action	Cost	Funding	Priority
2012	Michigan City parking lot needs ADA symbol repainted and van sign installed	\$50	General Fund	Paint: Low Sign: Medium
Brincka-Cross Gardens County Park				
Year	Action	Cost	Funding	Priority
House				
2014	Entry steps into house	\$2,000	General Fund	Low
2014	Doorways clearance width	\$2,500	General Fund	Low
2014	Upstairs railings	\$1,500	General Fund	Low
2014	Visual & audible fire alarms	\$1,500	General Fund	Low
Gardens and Parking				
2013	Pathways and trails	\$150,000	Grants	Medium
2012	Parking lot	\$70,000	CEDIT	High

Fixed vs. Variable Costs

Expenses	
Program Delivery	\$ 25,000.00
Operations & Maintenance	\$ 61,150.00
Marketing & Admissions	\$ 45,000.00
General & Administration	\$ 507,931.00
Total	\$ 639,081.00
Earned Income	
Program Fees	\$ 47,366.25
Rentals	\$ 8,550.00
Events	\$ 10,000.00
Tourism Grant	\$ 35,640.00
Total Cost Recovery	\$ 101,556.25
Cost Recovery %	16%
Total Fixed Costs	\$ 438,551.00
Fixed Cost Ratio	69%
Total Variable Costs	\$ 200,530.00
Variable Cost Ratio	31%

Ten Key Issues from Public Meeting

Below is a list of the ten key issues that were discussed at that public meeting. Below each item are the comments and words that participants wrote on the pieces of paper. Next to several of these comments are asterisks. The asterisks represent the number of stickers that people placed next to the comments they felt most strongly about. The items highlighted in yellow on this document are those that the staff identified as having the most traction and attention by the group.

- Land Acquisition Plan & Policy
 - Natural/Conservation Lands *
 - More land for County Parks
 - Buy more property south of US 30 *
 - Prioritize on unique and threatened properties *
 - Protect waterways—can be used to connect parks *
- Park & Program Accessibility
 - Achieve balance between resource integrity and physical accessibility **
 - Hispanic language programming/signs when needed
- Sunset Hill Farm Development & Layout
 - Interested in gathering place/barn for indoor events *****
 - Community garden expansion
 - Historical farming & animal husbandry
 - Cows & milk cows
 - Keep alive dairy farm history
 - Make Sunset Hill a “working farm” (dairy, grain, hogs, etc.) *****
 - Restore prairies
 - Remove invasive species
 - Save wetlands **
 - Increase usage of amphitheater *****
- Brincka Cross Rehabilitation & Layout
 - Stop spread of English/Baltic Ivy
 - Restore gardens
 - Preserve non-garden in north end of BC
 - Get Bill & Basil’s old friends & celebrity guests to donate to restoration
- Program & Park Development in South County
 - Collier Lodge *
 - Multi-Sport Complex (soccer, baseball, softball) *****
 - Redevelop wetland park by river
 - Look at adding more land & wetland along Kankakee River including old bayous...Look at waterways & wetland adjacent to Kankakee & KRBC land in Porter County **
 - More land along Kankakee River—also tributaries and wetlands *
 - Equestrian Center *****
- Program Development

- Expand & Embellish Earth Day Event
- Docent program
- Develop “No Child Left Inside” programs
- Encourage place-based interest in kids & adults
- Build an outdoor ice rink *****
- Equestrian programs **
- Park Maintenance and Operations
 - New tractors and mowers ***
 - Stop mowing grass—plant prairie and save fuel
 - Conserve & generate energy on site such as P.V. and wind
 - If not in place, develop a O&M budget and maintenance capital fund
- Balance between active and passive usage & programs
 - Build Brookdale (it’s both active and passive) *
 - County park balance must heavily favor passive and natural resource programs
 - Low impact/passive-no more big developments
 - This is Porter County, passive **
- Communications & Marketing
 - Get word out on all property owned by park department
 - Would like to see quarterly or annual magazine covering services available in park department *
 - Embossed paper/literature to create a 3-D feel to park information
 - Challenge is to balance use of traditional and electronic methods of communication and marketing *
 - IS PCPD web site up and running?
 - Set special (illegible) on trails, as dunes does
 - Create signage for park location (i.e. Brincka Park) *
- Volunteer Programs
 - More education in volunteer programs **
 - Very important recognition program PCPRD did last month...a very nice way to honor volunteers
- Parking Lot
 - Role/programs on County Waterways
 - Water park development *
 - Protect endangered & threatened species on Calumet Trail
 - Senior Citizen ballroom dances
 - Artificial ice rink for ice hockey & figure skating **
 - County pool

Stakeholder Interviews

Jeremy Rivas (County Council)
John Evans (County Commissioner)
Carol Knoblock (County Commissioner)
Bob Thompson (County Planner)
AJ Monroe (City of Portage)
Kris Krouse (Shirley Heinze Land Trust)
Dave Yeager (Porter County Parks
Foundation)

Focus Groups

Active Recreation Advocates

Michelle Miloshoff (Liberty Recreation)
Steve Kearney (Duneland School Corporation)
John Seibert (Valparaiso Parks Department)
Dan Sturgell (Calumet Striders)

Passive Recreation Advocates

Nicole Barker (Save the Dunes Council)
Mitch Barloga (NIRPC)
Dave Bobrowski (Porter County Conservation)
John Hodson (Kankakee River Basin Commission)

Programs and Partners

Allison Baughman (Duneland Chamber)
Lyndsay Ploehn (Purdue Extension)
Jill Stricker (Parents as Teachers)
Sharon Kish (Porter County United Way)
Maggie Byrne (The Nature Conservancy)
Chuck Gleason (County Line Orchard)

Department Staff

Walter Lenckos
Gayle O'Connor
Matt Pera
Matt Howton
Katie Rizer
Matt Brown
Ryan Wilson
Marie Foster
Shirley Massey
Sara Grassmeyer

All Focus Groups and Stakeholder Interviews were held at either the Sunset Hill Farm Program Center or the Porter County Administration Building during January, 2012.

Community Needs Assessment and Project Management Study Porter County Parks and Recreation Department

Questions for Focus Groups

1. *Have you used Porter County Parks over the past 2 years?*
2. *What facilities have you used?*
3. *On a scale of 5-1 with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor, how would you rate the overall quality of outdoor parks and recreation facilities provided by the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department that you have used*
4. *Are there any gaps in the outdoor parks and recreation system you feel should be developed or improved?*
5. *Do you think the most important issue facing the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department is a) maintaining current parks, trails, historic sites, and recreation facilities; b) building new parks, trails, historic and recreation facilities; or c) acquiring open space, or d) something else?*
6. *A statistically valid survey of Porter County residents will be conducted later this year. What types of questions would you most like to see asked on the survey?*
7. *The Porter County Parks and Recreation Department is using this citizen involvement process as a kick-off to a long range strategic plan. Based on what you know now what do you think the top strategic priorities should be for the Department?*
8. *If today was the year 2016, what are the most important actions that you hope to have accomplished through the needs assessment process? (Write down your answer on the sheet provided)*

Thank you for your participation and comments

Community Needs Assessment and Project Management Study Porter County Parks and Recreation Department

Questions for Stakeholder Interviews

Interviewee: _____

Date: _____

Position: _____

1. What do you feel are the three most important issues facing Porter County?
2. What do you feel are the three most important issues facing the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department?
3. On a scale of 5-1 with 5 being excellent and 1 being poor, how would you rate the overall quality of outdoor parks and recreation facilities provided by the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department?
4. What do you like best about the Parks and Recreation Department?
4. Are there any gaps in the outdoor parks and recreation system you feel should be developed or improved?
5. Do you think the most important issue facing the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department is a) maintaining current parks, trails, historic sites, and recreation facilities; b) building new parks, trails, historic and recreation facilities; or c) acquiring open space, or d) something else?
6. What do you feel are the principal sources of revenue that should be considered for financing Parks and Recreation projects over the next five years?
7. A statistically valid survey of Porter County residents will be conducted later this year. What types of questions would you most like to see asked on the survey?

8. What do you think the image of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department is in the community, and why?
9. The Porter County Parks and Recreation Department is using this citizen involvement process as a kick-off to a long range strategic plan. Based on what you know now what do you think the top strategic priorities should be for the Department?
10. Is there anything that I have not asked that is an issue that should be addressed in the Needs Assessment Study?
11. If today was the year 2016, what are the most important actions that you hope to have accomplished through the needs assessment process?

Thank you for your comments

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment for Porter County

Executive Summary Report

Overview of the Methodology

Leisure Vision conducted a Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County during the winter of 2011-2012. The purpose of the survey was to help determine outdoor parks, trails, open space and recreation priorities for our community. The survey was designed to obtain statistically valid results from households throughout Porter County. The survey was administered by a combination of mail and phone.

Leisure Vision worked extensively with Porter County officials in the development of the survey questionnaire. This work allowed the survey to be tailored to issues of strategic importance to effectively plan the future system.

In December 2011, Leisure Vision mailed surveys to a random sample of 2,000 households throughout Porter County. Approximately three days after the surveys were mailed each household that received a survey also received an automated voice message encouraging them to complete the survey. In addition, about two weeks after the surveys were mailed Leisure Vision began contacting households by phone. Those who indicated they had not returned the survey were given the option of completing it by phone.

The goal was to obtain a total of at least 400 completed surveys from Porter County households. This goal was accomplished, with a total of 401 surveys having been completed. The level of confidence is 95% with a margin of error of +/-4.9%.

The following pages summarize major survey findings.

Major Survey Findings

- **ALL Facilities Used or Visited in Parks Located in Porter County.** There are five facilities that at least 55% of respondents used or visited in parks located in Porter County over the past year: sand dunes (70%), walking, hiking and biking trails (67%), fairgrounds (66%), swimming beaches and areas (55%), and lake front parks (55%).
- **Facilities Households Visit Most Often.** Based on the sum of their top three choices, the facilities that households indicated they visit the most often are: walking, hiking and biking trails (43%), sand dunes (26%), playgrounds (26%), and swimming areas (23%).
- **Parks and Recreation Sites Visited Over the Past Year.** Sunset Hills Farm Park (58%) is the most frequently-mentioned Porter County Parks and Recreation site that respondent households have visited over the past year. The least frequently-mentioned Porter County Parks and Recreation site that respondent households have visited over the past year is Brincka Cross (4%).
- **Rating of Physical Condition of ALL Porter County Sites Visited.** Ninety-one percent (91%) of respondents rate the physical condition of ALL Porter County Parks and Recreation Department sites visited as either excellent (26%) or good (65%). The remaining rate the physical condition as fair (8%) or poor (1%).
- **ALL Organizations Used For Outdoor and Indoor Activities.** There are three organizations that at least 60% of respondents indicated they and members of their household have used for outdoor and indoor parks and recreation activities during the last year. These three organizations are: National Lakeshore (63%), Indiana Dunes State Park (62%), and Porter City Parks and Recreation (60%). The least frequently-mentioned organization that respondents indicated using for outdoor and indoor parks and recreation activities is 4-H Club (5%).
- **TWO Open Space Options Households Would Support the Most.** Based on the sum of their top two choices, the open space options that respondent households would support the most are: open space acquired and improved for passive usage (51%), open space acquired and improved for both active and passive usages (44%), and land acquired and left undeveloped for future generations (44%),
- **ALL Reasons That Prevent Households From Using Facilities or Programs More Often.** “I do not know what’s being offered” (31%) was the most frequently-mentioned reason that prevents households from using facilities or programs of the

Porter County Parks and Recreation Department more often. The second most frequently-mentioned reason was “I do not know locations of parks” (23%).

- **Need For OUTDOOR Parks, Trails, and Recreational Facilities.** There are five outdoor parks, trails, and recreational facilities that at least 62% of respondents have a need for, including: walking and hiking trails (78%), lake front parks (65%), nature trails (65%), swimming and sunbathing beaches (63%), and picnicking areas and shelters (62%).
- **Facilities Most Important to Household Members.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the outdoor parks, trails, and recreational facilities that respondents indicated were most important to their households included: walking and hiking trails (53%), swimming and sunbathing beaches (32%), biking trails (28%), nature trails (25%), and lake front parks (25%).
- **Support For Parks and Recreation Department Partnering With Cities, Schools, and Non-Profits.** Seventy-seven percent (77%) of respondents indicated they are either very supportive (43%) or somewhat supportive (34%) of Porter County Parks and Recreation Department partnering with cities, schools, and non-profits in the development of youth and adult sports fields and programs. In addition, 18% indicated they are not sure and 5% indicated they are “not supportive”.
- **Support For Actions Parks and Recreation Department Could Take to Improve the System of Streams and Creeks.** Eighty-nine percent (89%) of respondents indicated they are either very supportive (67%) or somewhat supportive (22%) of Porter County Parks and Recreation Department providing environmental protection. Other actions for which households indicated a level of support include developing a network of walking, hiking and biking trails (81%) and acquiring land along streams and greenways (71%).
- **Agreement with Benefits Received From Facilities and Services.** There are four benefits that at least 85% of respondents strongly agree or agree their household receives from parks, trails, and recreation facilities and services: improved physical health and fitness (93%), increased property values in surrounding area (86%), develop recreation trails connecting parks (86%), and making Porter County a more desirable place to live (85%).
- **Benefits Most Important to Respondent Households.** Based on the sum of their top three choices, the benefits that are most important to respondent household members are: improved physical health and fitness (59%), making Porter County a more desirable place to live (37%), protecting water quality (31%), and preserving

open space and the environment (31%).

- **Benefits Most Important to the FUTURE of Porter County.** Based on the sum of their top three choices, the benefits that respondents indicated are most important to their households are: making Porter County a more desirable place to live (39%), protecting water quality (38%), and increasing property values in the surrounding area (35%).
- **How the Direct Cost for Offering Programs Should Be Paid.** For five of the six programs/activities, at least 25% of respondents felt that the direct costs for offering the program or activity should be paid by 50% taxes and 50% fees. The only program or activity that the majority of respondents (35%) felt should be paid 100% by taxes was for programs for people with disabilities.
- **Support for Actions to Improve County Parks and Recreation System.** Of the 11 actions that Porter County could take to improve the Parks and Recreation system, at least 50% of respondents indicated they were either very supportive or somewhat supportive of 10 of these actions. In addition, 47% of respondents indicated they were supportive of developing a new off-leash dog park.
- **FOUR Actions Most Willing to Fund With Tax Dollars.** Based on the sum of their top four choices, the actions that respondents indicated they would be most willing to fund with County parks and recreation tax dollars are: providing environmental protection and improving water quality (47%), developing a connected system of walking, hiking, biking, and nature trails throughout the County (46%), acquiring land to develop walking and hiking trails (45%), and acquiring open space to preserve and protect the environment (43%).
- **Allocation of \$100 Among Various Categories of Funding.** Respondents were asked how they would allocate funding among various categories if given \$100. The findings are below:
 - Acquisition and development of walking and biking trails (\$24)
 - Development of passive facilities (picnic areas, playgrounds, etc.) (\$17)
 - Acquisition of new park land and open space (\$17)
 - Improvements/maintenance of Sunset Hills Farm Park (\$16)
 - Development of an indoor environmental education center (\$10)
 - Construction of new sports fields (softball, soccer, baseball, etc.) (\$9)
 - Other (\$6)

- **Support of Using Interest Revenues.** Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents indicated that they were either very supportive (41%) or somewhat supportive (34%) of using some of the interest revenues being earned by Porter County from the hospital to acquire, maintain, and develop the types of parks, trails, sports and recreation facilities most important to their household. In addition, 16% indicated they were “not sure” and the remaining 9% were “not supportive”.

- **Importance of Funding Improvements Compared to Other Priorities.** Eighty-three percent (83%) of respondents indicated that it is either very important (33%) or somewhat important (50%) for Porter County to fund improvements to the parks and recreation system compared to other priorities such as public safety, roads and utilities. Additionally, 7% are not sure and the remaining 10% indicated it is not important.

Community Interest and Opinion Survey: *Let your voice be heard today!*

The Porter County Parks and Recreation Department needs your input to help determine outdoor parks, trails, open space and recreation priorities for our community. This survey will take 10-15 minutes to complete. When you are finished, please return your survey in the enclosed postage-paid, return-reply envelope. We greatly appreciate your time and efforts to improve the quality of life in Porter County.

Do you reside in Porter County?

___ (1) Yes [please proceed with the survey]

___ (2) No [please discontinue the survey. This survey is only for residents of Porter County]

1. From the following list, please check ALL the outdoor parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities you or members of your household have used or visited in City, County, State and National parks that are located in Porter County over the past 12 months.

- | | |
|---|--|
| ___ (01) Walking, hiking, and biking trails | ___ (15) Softball fields |
| ___ (02) Nature trails | ___ (16) 18 and 9 hole golf courses |
| ___ (03) Equestrian trails | ___ (17) Fairgrounds |
| ___ (04) Mountain biking trails | ___ (18) Soccer fields |
| ___ (05) Amphitheaters | ___ (19) Natural areas and wildlife habitats |
| ___ (06) Waterparks and waterslides | ___ (20) Nature interpretive centers |
| ___ (07) Fishing areas | ___ (22) Cross-country skiing |
| ___ (08) Boating areas | ___ (22) Ice skating/ice-hockey |
| ___ (09) Swimming beaches and areas | ___ (23) Toboggan runs |
| ___ (10) Lake front parks | ___ (24) Overnight camping |
| ___ (11) Sand dunes | ___ (25) Disc golf courses |
| ___ (12) Picnicking areas | ___ (26) Playgrounds |
| ___ (13) Youth baseball fields | ___ (27) Other: _____ |
| ___ (14) Dog Parks | ___ (28) None |

2. Which THREE of the parks and recreation facilities listed in Question #1 do you and members of your household visit the most often? [Please write in the numbers below for your 1st, 2nd, and 3rd choices using the numbers in Question #1 above, or circle NONE.]

_____ 1 st Most Often	_____ 2 nd Most Often	_____ 3 rd Most Often	NONE
--	--	--	------

3. From the following list, please check ALL the Porter County Parks and Recreation sites you or members of your household have visited over the past 12 months

- | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ___ (1) Sunset Hills Farm Park | ___ (3) Calumet Trail |
| ___ (2) Brincka Cross Gardens | ___ (4) Dunn's Bridge County Park |

4. Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of ALL the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department sites you have visited?

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (1) Excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> (3) Fair |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (2) Good | <input type="checkbox"/> (4) Poor |

5. From the following list, please check ALL the organizations that you and members of your household have used for outdoor and indoor parks and recreation activities during the last 12 months.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) City facilities in Porter County | <input type="checkbox"/> (08) Public schools |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Township facilities in Porter County | <input type="checkbox"/> (09) Boys and Girls Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Porter County Parks and Rec. Depart. | <input type="checkbox"/> (10) YMCA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Department of Natural Resources land | <input type="checkbox"/> (11) Indiana Dunes State Park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (05) National Lakeshore | <input type="checkbox"/> (12) Boy Scouts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Private health and fitness clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> (13) 4-H Club |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Girl Scouts | |

6. The Porter County Parks and Recreation Commission has many options regarding acquiring and developing open space for parks and recreation purposes. From the following list, please check the TWO open space options that you and members of your household would support the most.

- (A) Open space should be acquired and left undeveloped for future generations.
- (B) Open space should be acquired and improved for passive usage, i.e. trails, picnicking, shelters.
- (C) Open space should be acquired and improved for active usage, i.e. golf, water parks, campgrounds, etc.
- (D) Open space should be acquired and improved for both passive (trails, picnicking) and active (golf, water parks, campgrounds) usages.
- (E) No new open space should be acquired.

7. Please CHECK ALL the reasons that prevent you or other members of your household from using parks, trails, recreation facilities or programs of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department more often.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> (01) Parks are not well maintained | <input type="checkbox"/> (10) I do not know locations of parks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (02) Facilities are not well maintained | <input type="checkbox"/> (11) I do not know what is being offered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (03) Lack of trails connectivity | <input type="checkbox"/> (12) Use facilities in cities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (04) Security is insufficient | <input type="checkbox"/> (13) Lack facilities in townships |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (05) Lack of transportation | <input type="checkbox"/> (14) Park operating hours not convenient |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (06) Lack of access | <input type="checkbox"/> (15) Parks are too far from our residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (07) Parks and facilities are too crowded | <input type="checkbox"/> (16) Fees are too high |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (08) Not enough special events | <input type="checkbox"/> (17) Lack of parking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> (09) Programs we want are not offered | |

8. Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the OUTDOOR parks,

trails, and recreational facilities listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the park/facility.

If YES, please rate ALL the following parks and recreation FACILITIES of this type in Porter County on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 means “100% Meets Needs” and 1 means “Does Not Meet Needs” of your household.

Type of Facility	Do You Have a Need for this Facility?		If YES You Have a Need, How Well Are Your Needs Being Met?				
	Yes	No	100% Met	75% Met	50% Met	25% Met	0% Met
A. Walking and hiking trails	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
B. Biking trails	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
C. Equestrian trails	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
D. Mountain biking trails	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
E. Nature trails	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
F. Waterparks and waterslides	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
G. Boating and sailing areas	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
H. Fishing areas	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
I. Swimming and sunbathing beaches	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
J. Dog parks	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
K. Skate park	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
L. Equestrian center	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
M. Bicycle motocross track	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
N. Amphitheaters	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
O. Platform tennis courts	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
P. Lake front parks	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
Q. Working farm parks	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
R. Tennis courts	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
S. Nature interpretive centers	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
T. Disc golf	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
T. Cross country skiing	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
U. Outdoor ice-skating areas	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
V. Toboggan runs	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
W. Overnight camping areas	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
X. Picnicking areas and shelters	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1
Y. Children's playgrounds	Yes	No	5	4	3	2	1

9. Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question #8 are *most important* for you and members of your household to be provided in Porter County? [Using the letters and number in the left hand column of Question #8 above, please write in the letters or number below for your 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choices, or circle 'NONE'.]

1st: _____ 2nd: _____ 3rd: _____ 4th: _____ NONE

15. For the following programs and activities, please circle the ONE option that best describes how you feel the direct costs for offering the program or activity should be paid

<u>Program or Activity</u>	<u>100% taxes 0% Fees</u>	<u>75% taxes 25% Fees</u>	<u>50% taxes 50% Fee</u>	<u>25% taxes 75% Fee</u>	<u>0% taxes 100% Fees</u>	<u>Don't Know</u>
A. Special events for families	1	2	3	4	5	9
B. Youth programs (0-12 years of age)	1	2	3	4	5	9
C. Teen programs (13-17 years of age)	1	2	3	4	5	9
D. Adult programs (18-64 years of age)	1	2	3	4	5	9
E. Older adults programs (65-and over years of age)	1	2	3	4	5	9
F. Programs for people with disabilities	1	2	3	4	5	9

16. The following are actions that the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department could take to improve the County Parks and Recreation system. Please indicate whether you would be very supportive, somewhat supportive, or not supportive of each action by circling the number next to the action.

<u>How supportive are you of having Porter County</u>	<u>Very Supportive</u>	<u>Somewhat Supportive</u>	<u>Not Sure</u>	<u>Not Supportive</u>
(A) Acquire land to preserve open space and protect the environment.....	4	3	2	1
(B) Acquire land to develop walking and hiking trails.....	4	3	2	1
(C) Acquire land for developing athletic fields & recreational facilities.....	4	3	2	1
(D) Acquire land to develop a park in South Porter County.....	4	3	2	1
(E) Upgrade/improve Sunset Hills Farm Park.....	4	3	2	1
(F) Develop a connected system of walking, hiking, biking and nature trails throughout the County.....	4	3	2	1
(G) Provide environmental protection, i.e. flood plain management and improve water quality.....	4	3	2	1
(H) Develop new youth and adult athletic fields and programs in partnership with the cities in Porter County.....	4	3	2	1
(I) Develop an environmental education center at Sunset Hills Farm Park.....	4	3	2	1
(J) Develop more programs and activities for rural residents of Porter County.....	4	3	2	1
(K) Develop a new off-leash dog park.....	4	3	2	1
(L) Other: _____.....	4	3	2	1

17. Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question #16 would you be most willing to fund with your County parks and recreation tax dollars? [Using the letters in the left hand column of Question #16 above, please write in the letters below for your 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th choices, or circle 'NONE'.]

1st: _____ 2nd: _____ 3rd: _____ 4th: _____ NONE

24. How many years have you lived in Porter County? _____
25. Please share any additional comments that could assist the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department in improving parks, trails, open space or recreational facilities and services.
-
-

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time.

**Please Return Your Completed Survey in the Enclosed Return-Reply Envelope Addressed to:
ETC Institute, 725 W. Frontier Circle, Olathe, KS 66061**

Your response will remain Completely Confidential
The address information on the sticker to the right will
ONLY be used to help identify areas with special interests

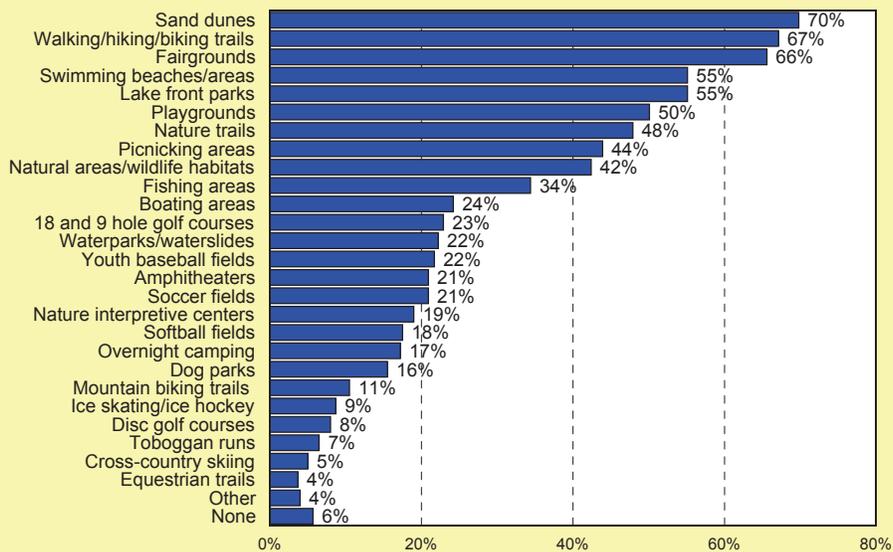
2012 Porter County

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey

Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q1. Outdoor Parks, Trails, Open Space and Recreation Facilities Visited Over the Past 12 Months

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices)

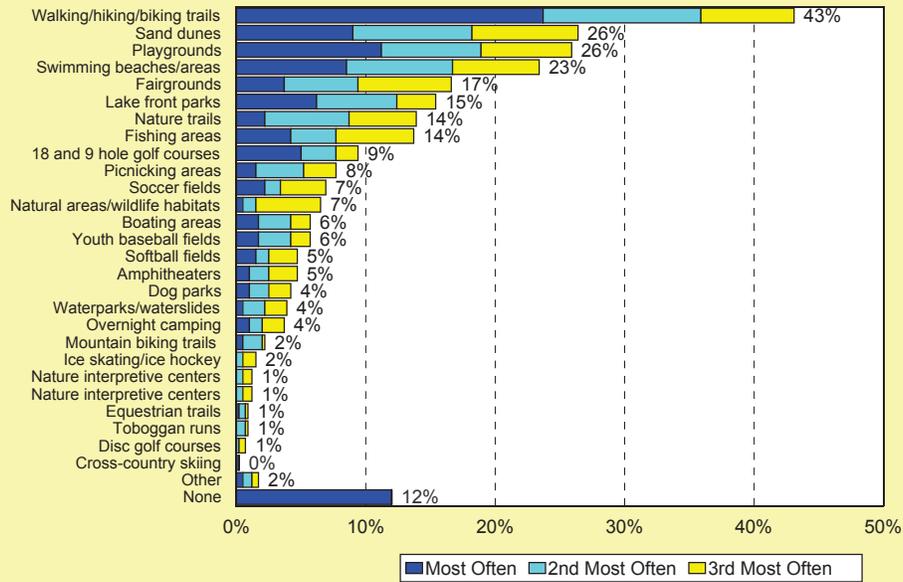


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q2. THREE Activities Respondent Household Members Visit Most Often

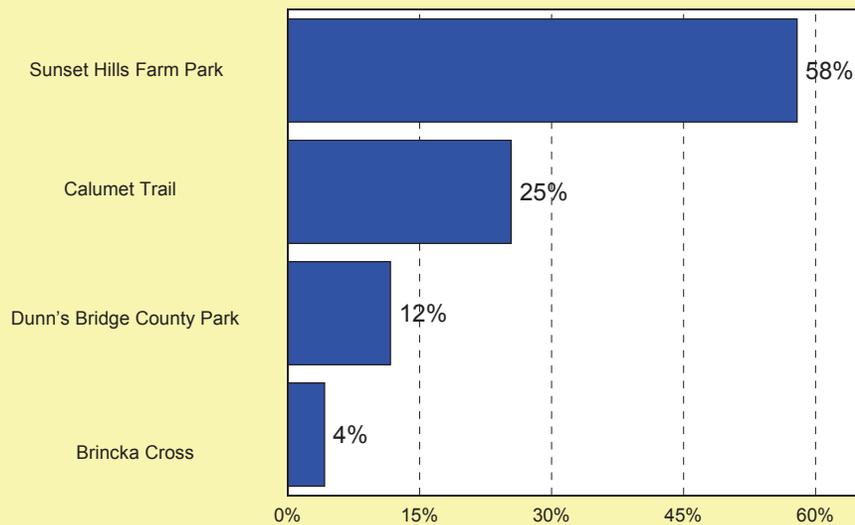
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top three choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q3. Porter County Parks and Recreation Sites Visited by Household Members Over the Past 12 Months

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices)

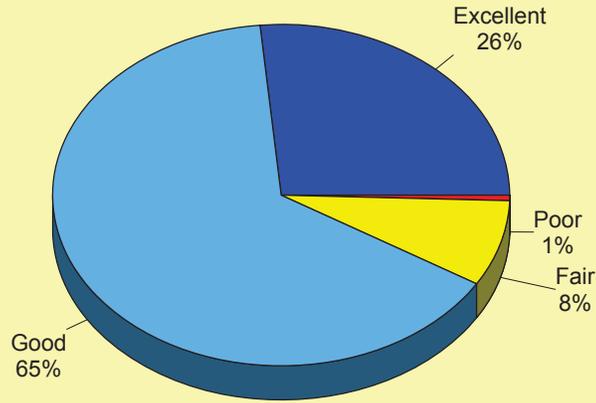


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q4. Physical Condition of All Porter County Parks and Recreation Sites Visited

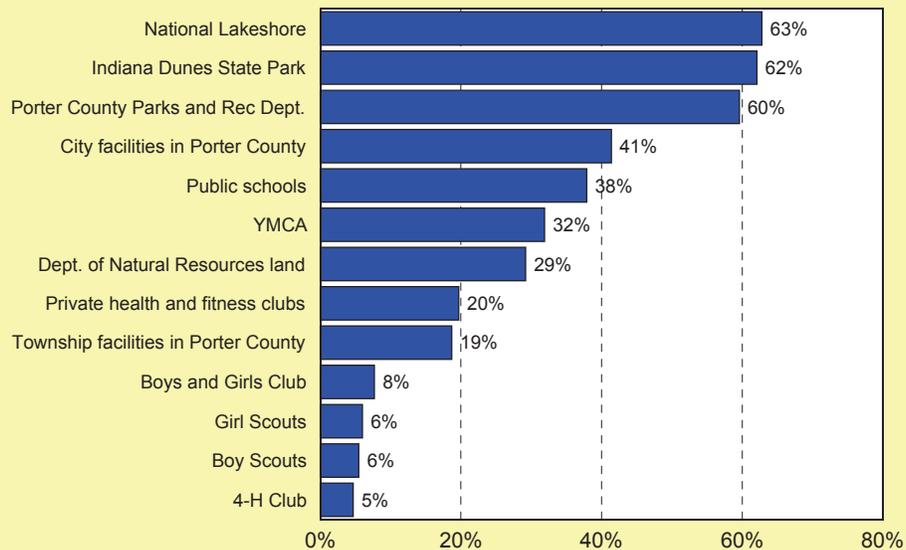
by percentage of respondents



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q5. ALL Organizations Used for Outdoor and Indoor Parks and Recreation Activities Over the Past 12 Months

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices)

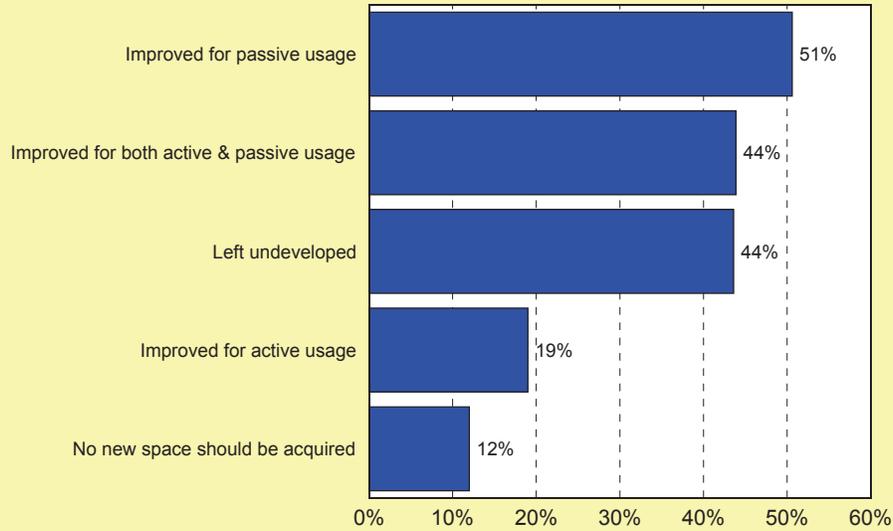


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q6. Open Space Options Respondent Households Would Support the Most

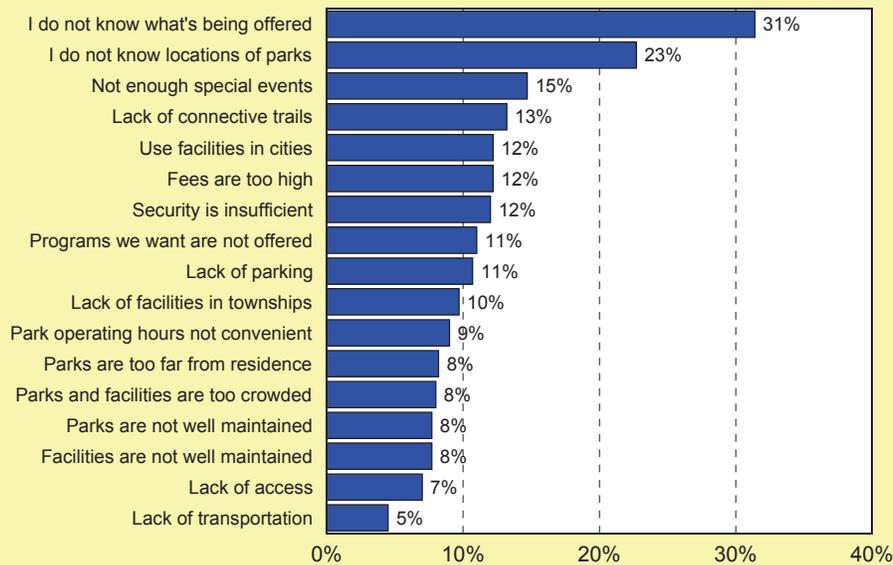
by percentage of respondents (multiple choices)



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

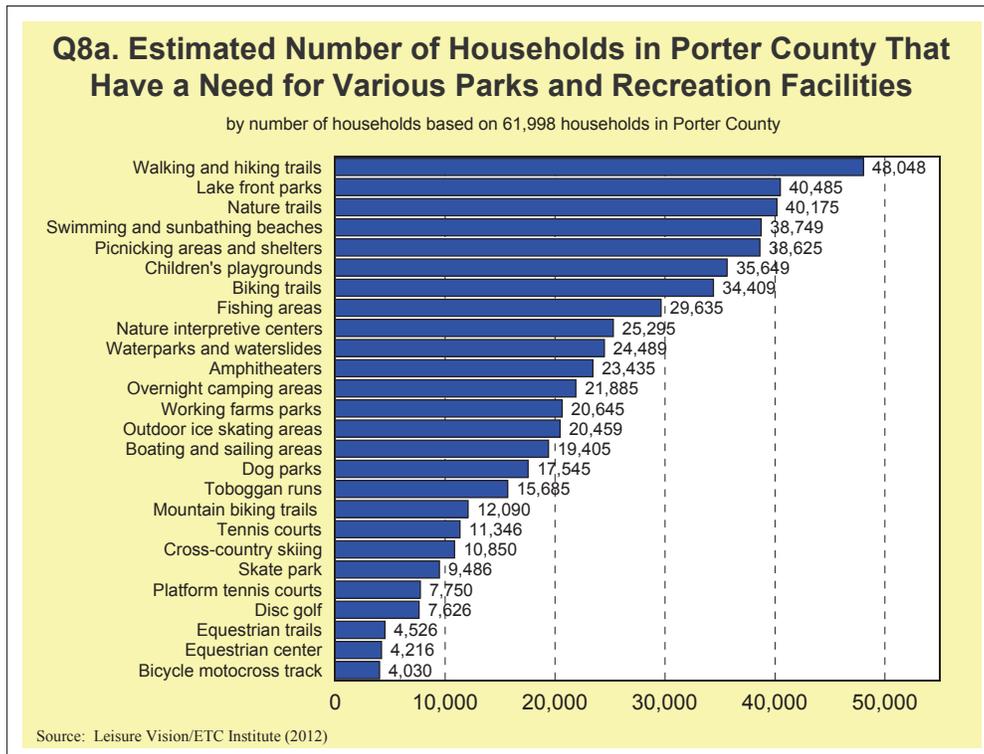
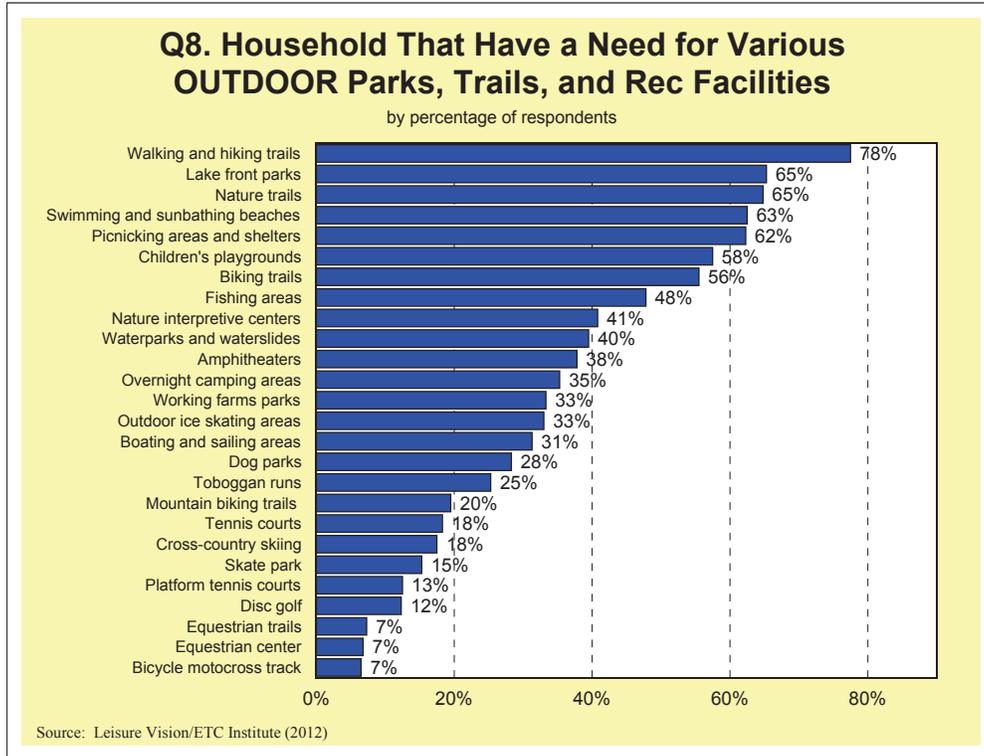
Q7. Reasons Preventing Respondent Households from Using Porter County Parks and Rec Department More Often

by percentage of respondents (multiple choices)



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

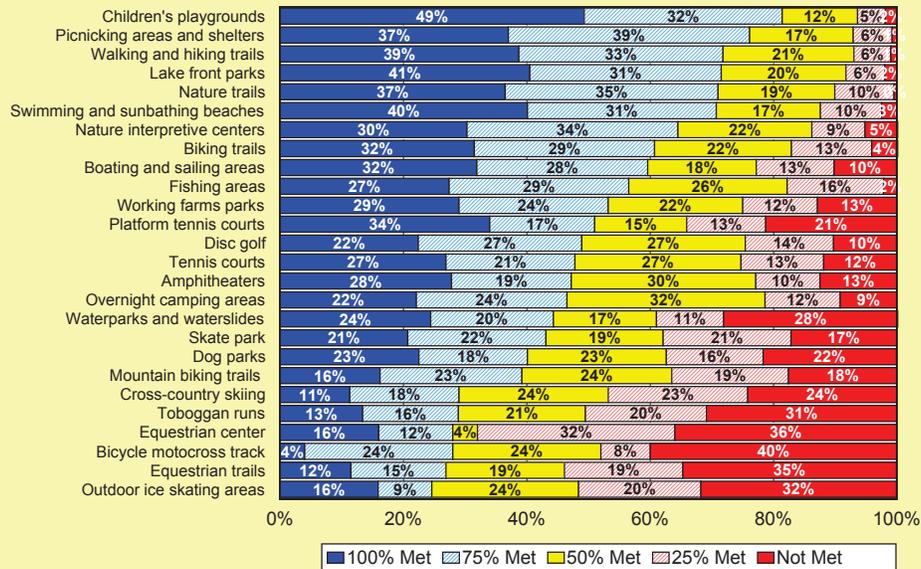
Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County



Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q8b. How Well Parks and Recreation Facilities in Porter County Meet the Needs of Households

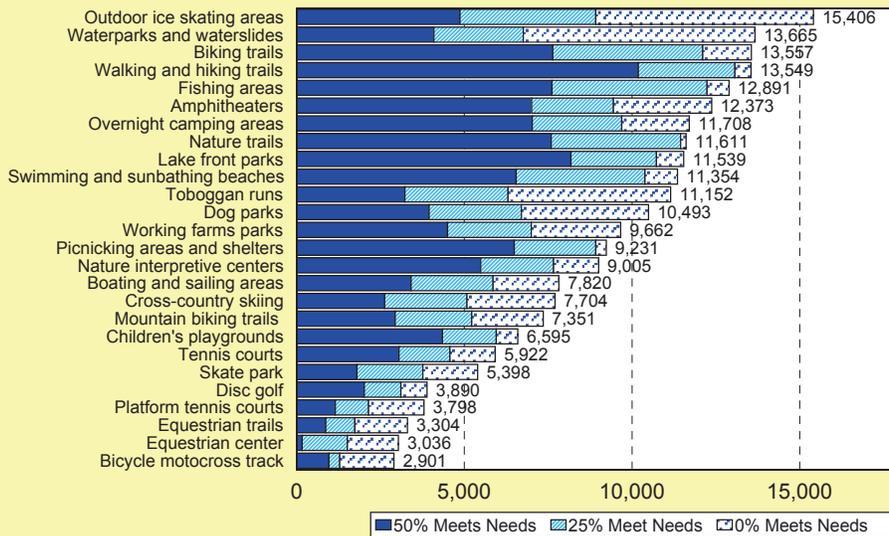
by percentage of households that have a need for parks/facilities



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q8c. Estimated Number of Households in Porter County Whose Needs for Parks and Recreation Facilities Are Only Being 50% Met or Less

by number of households based on 61,998 households in Porter County

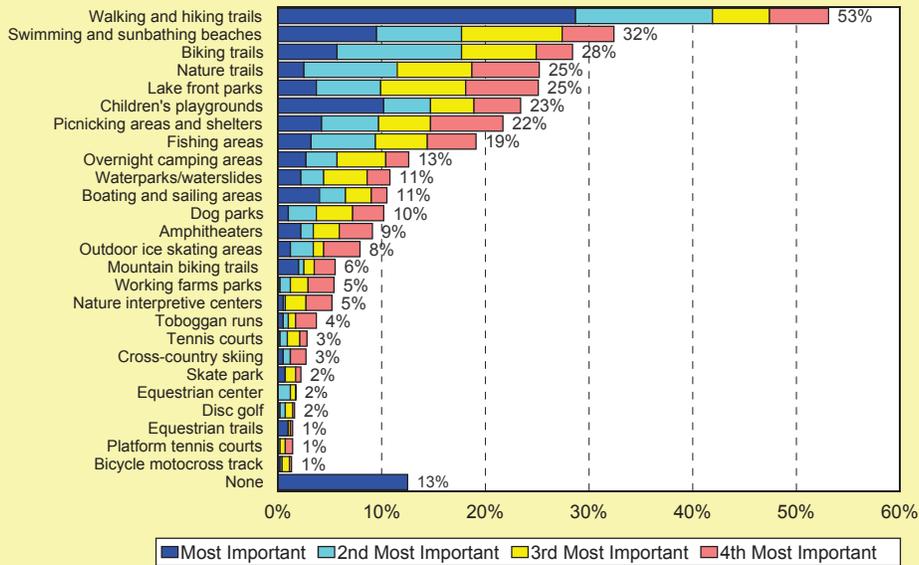


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q9. FOUR Facilities that Are Most Important to Respondent Households

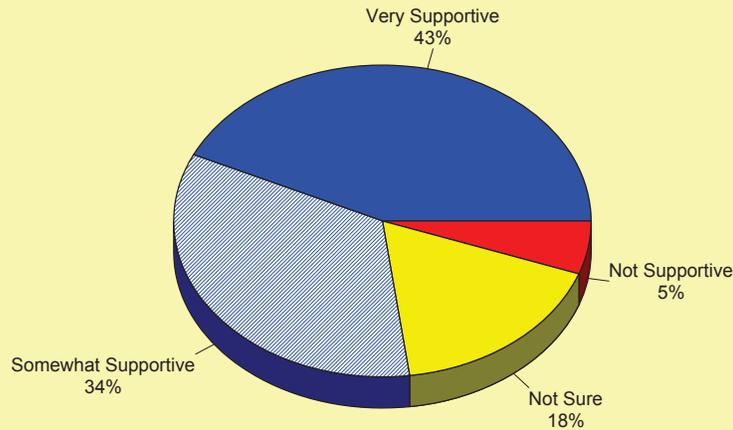
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q10. Level of Support for Partnership Between Porter County Parks and Rec Dept. and Cities, Schools and Non-Profits

by percentage of respondents

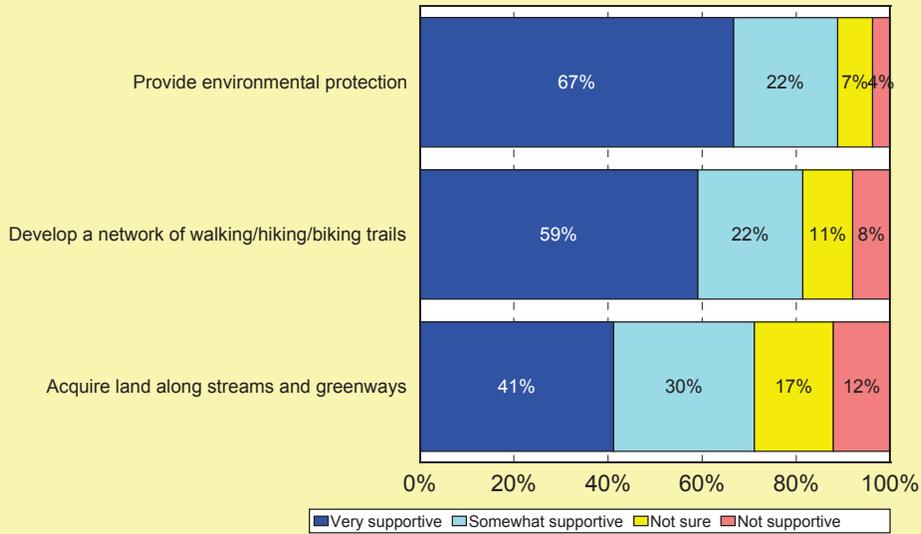


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q11. Level of Support for Improving Porter County's System of Streams and Creeks

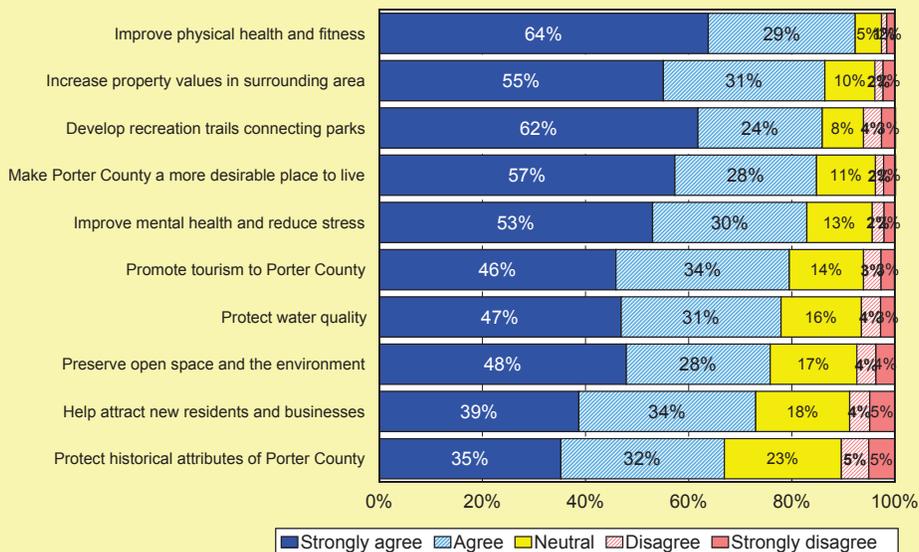
by percentage of respondents



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q12. Level of Agreement with Potential Benefits Received from Parks, Trails, and Recreation Facilities and Services

by percentage of respondents (excluding "don't know" responses)

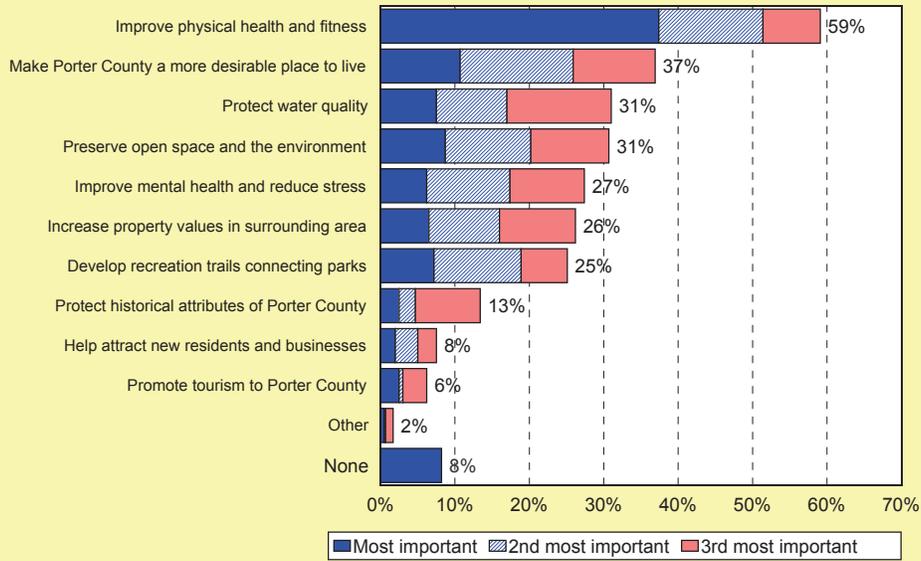


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q13. THREE Benefits Most Important to Respondent Households

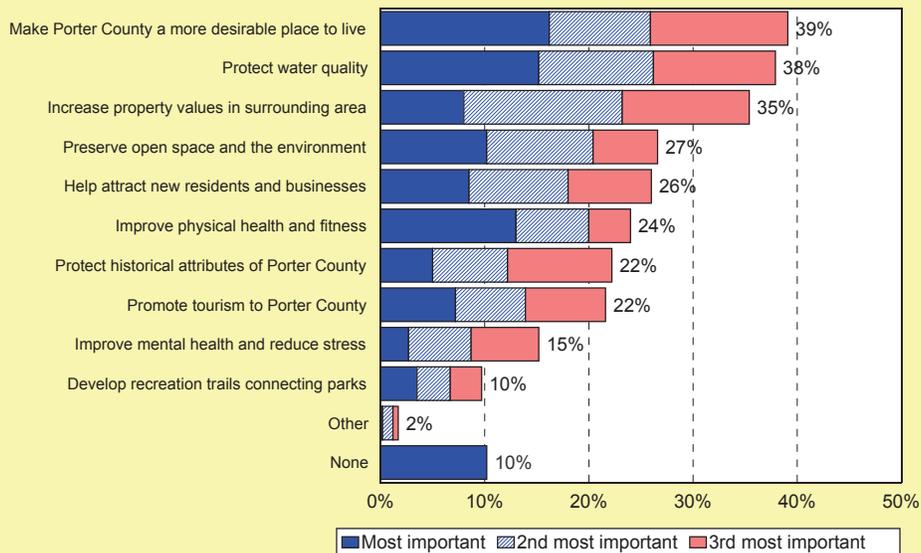
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top three choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q14. THREE Benefits Most Important to the FUTURE of Porter County

by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top three choices

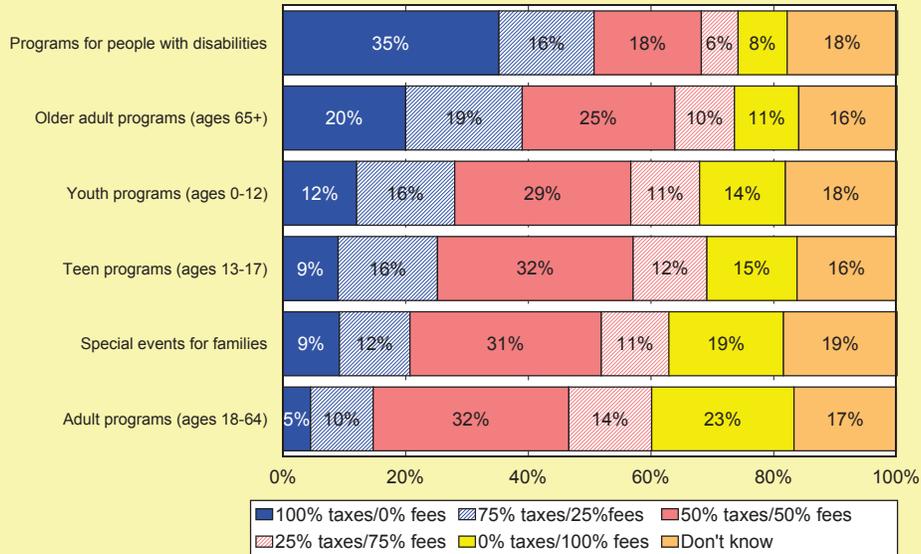


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q15. How Should the Direct Costs for Offering the Following Programs or Activities be Paid?

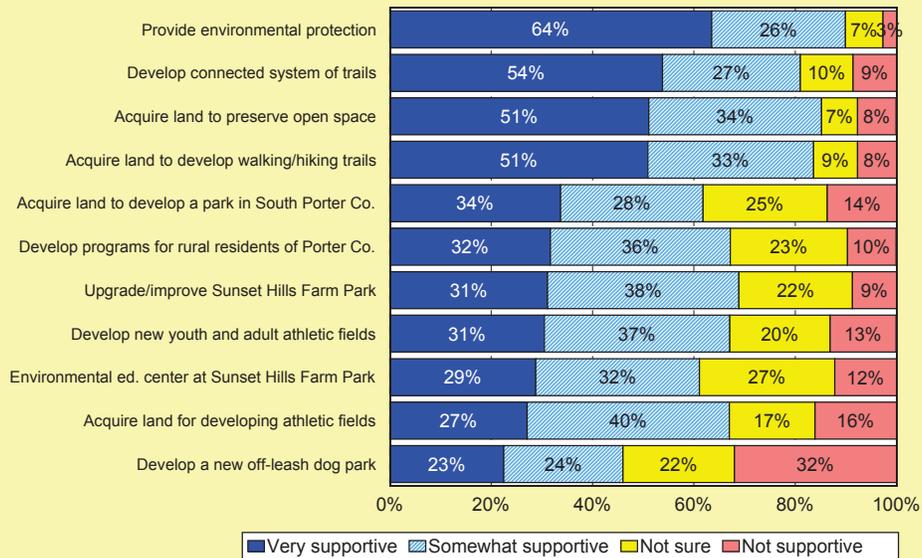
by percentage of respondents



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q16. Level of Support for Certain Improvements to Porter County Parks and Recreation System

by percentage of respondents

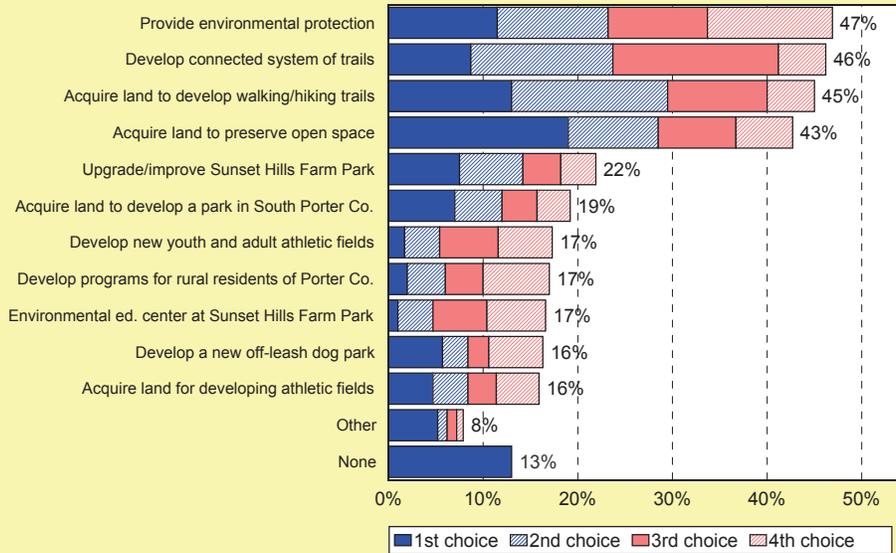


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q17. FOUR Improvements That Respondents Would be Most Willing to Fund with Parks and Recreation Tax Dollars

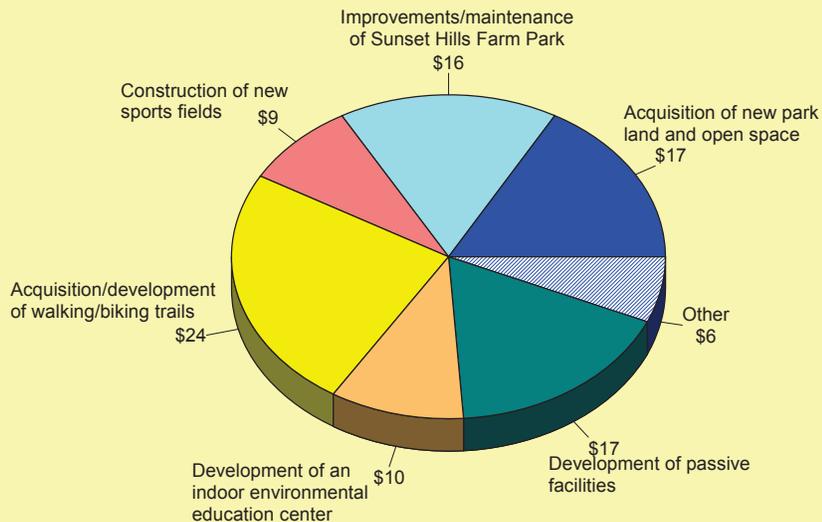
by percentage of respondents who selected the item as one of their top four choices



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q18. Ways in Which Respondent Would Allocate an Additional \$100 for Porter County Parks and Recreation Department

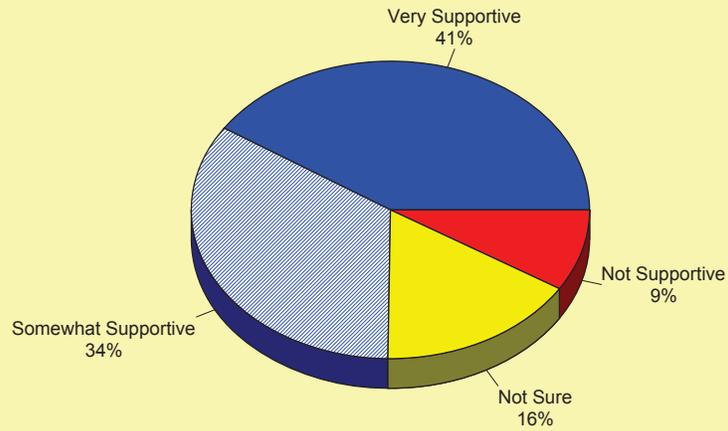
by percentage of respondents



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Q19. Level of Support for Using Interest Revenues to Acquire, Maintain and Develop Parks, Trails and Facilities

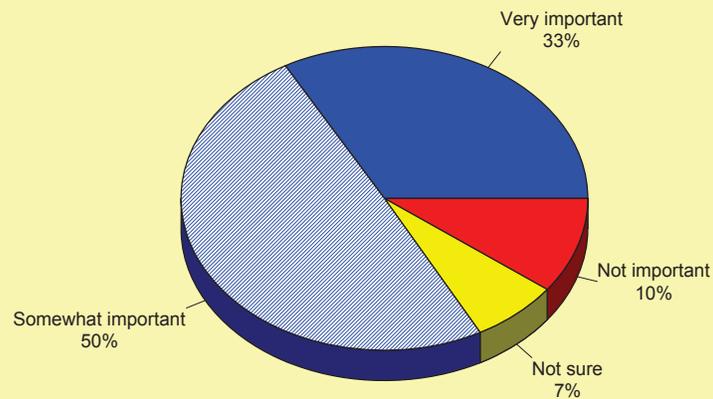
by percentage of respondents



Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

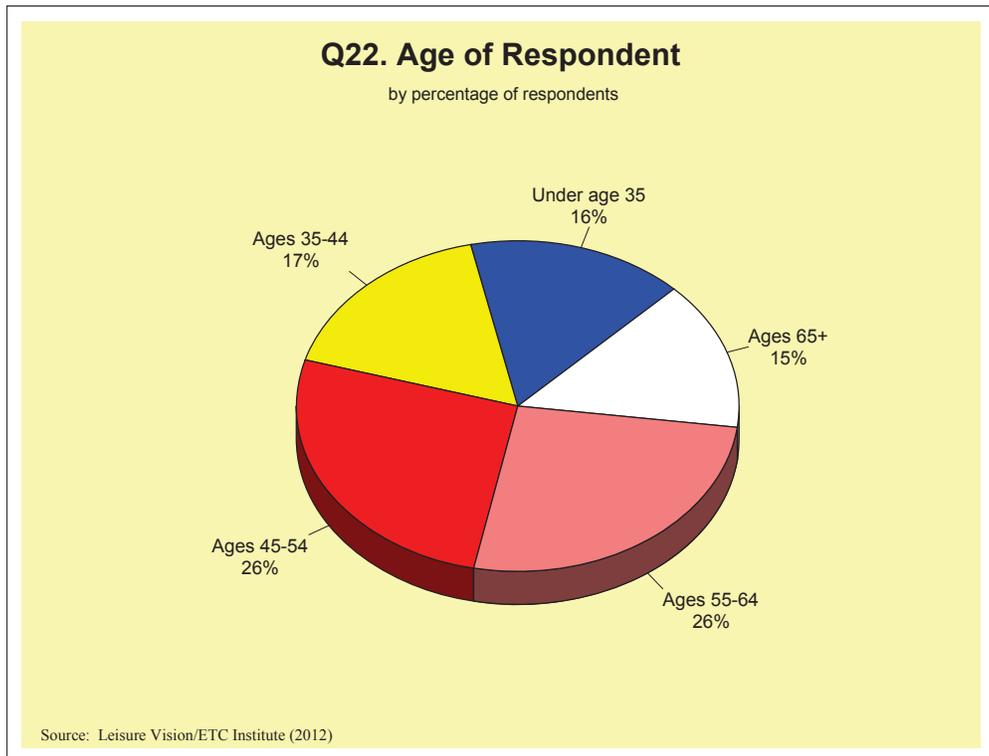
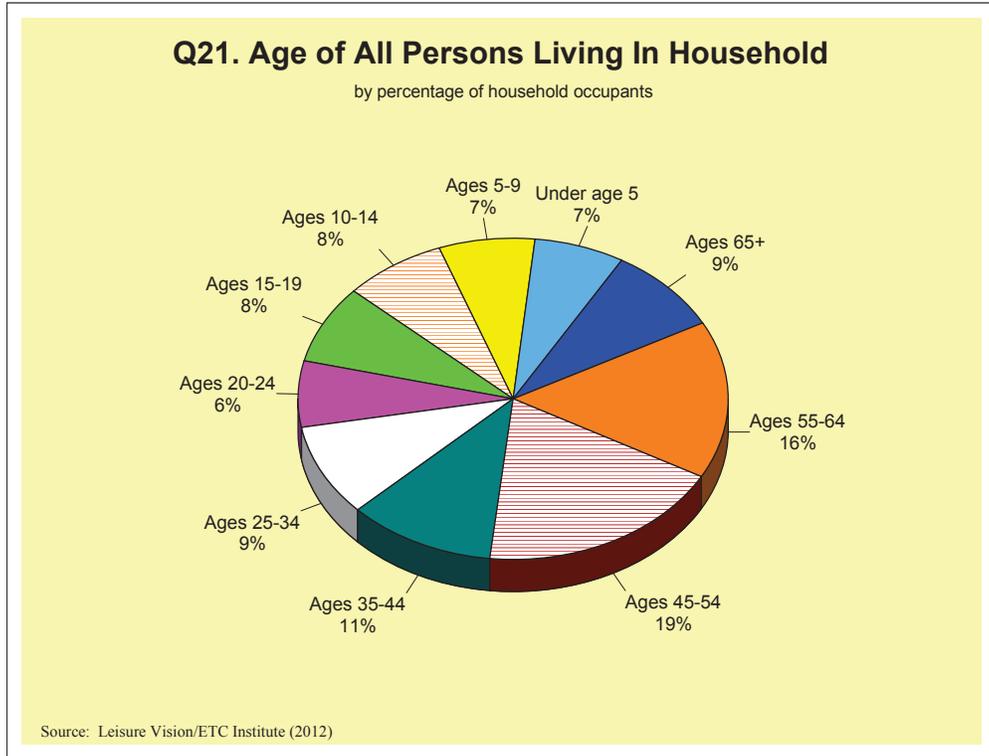
Q20. Importance of Funding Improvements to the Porter County Parks and Recreation System Compared to Other Priorities

by percentage of respondents

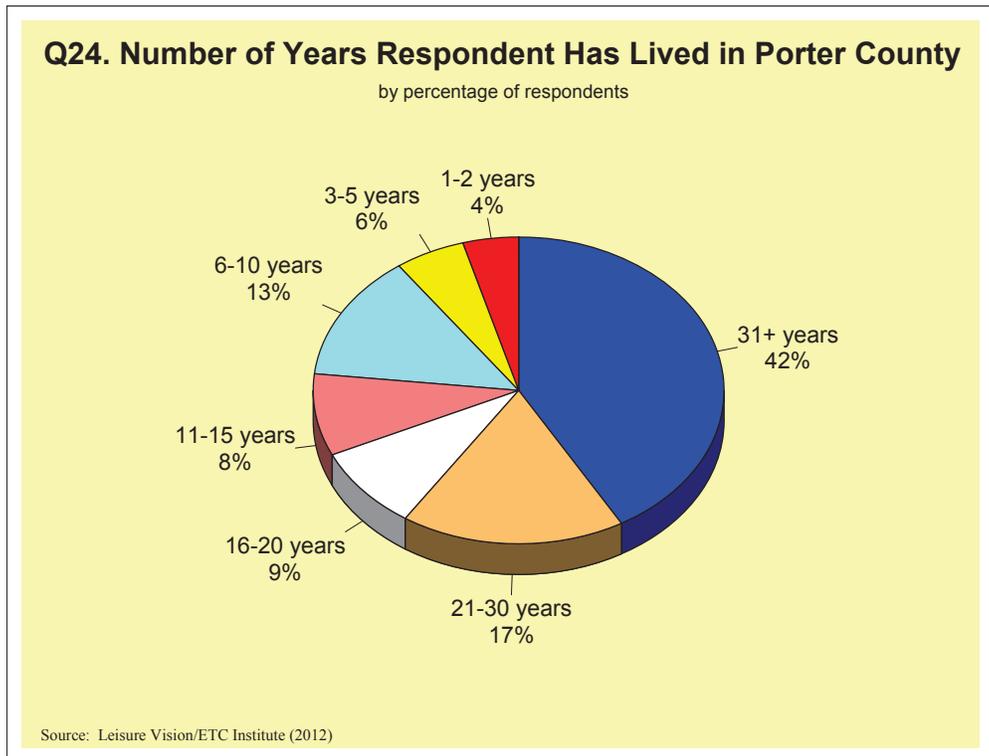
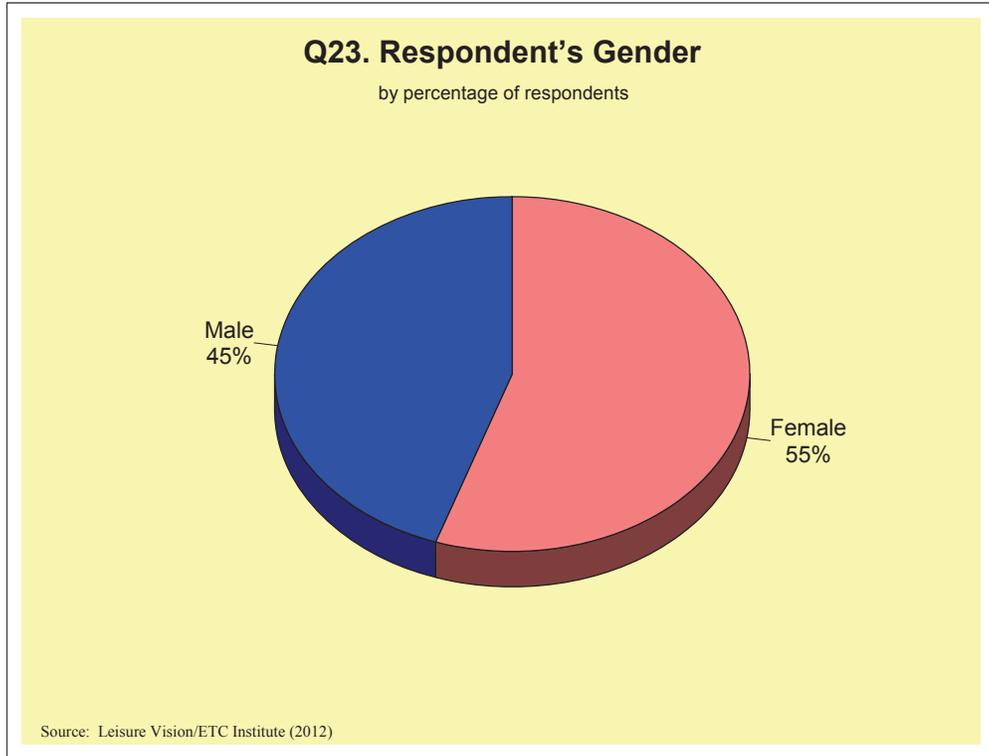


Source: Leisure Vision/ETC Institute (2012)

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County



Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County



National Benchmarking

Since 1998, Leisure Vision (a division of ETC Institute) has conducted household surveys for needs assessments, feasibility studies, customer satisfaction, fees and charges comparisons, and other parks and recreation issues in more than 400 communities in over 40 states across the country.

The results of these surveys has provided an unparalleled data base of information to compare responses from household residents in client communities to “National Averages” and therefore provide a unique tool to “assist organizations in better decision making.”

Communities within the data base include a full-range of municipal and county governments from 20,000 in population through over 1 million in population. They include communities in warm weather climates and cold weather climates, mature communities and some of the fastest growing cities and counties in the country.

Communities within the following states are included within the National Benchmarking data base.

- **Arizona**
- **Arkansas**
- **California**
- **Colorado**
- **Connecticut**
- **Florida**
- **Georgia**
- **Kansas**
- **Kentucky**
- **Idaho**
- **Illinois**
- **Indiana**
- **Iowa**
- **Maine**
- **Massachusetts**
- **Michigan**
- **Minnesota**
- **Mississippi**
- **Missouri**
- **Montana**
- **Nevada**
- **New Hampshire**
- **New Jersey**
- **New York**
- **North Carolina**
- **Ohio**
- **Oklahoma**
- **Oregon**
- **Pennsylvania**
- **Rhode Island**
- **South Carolina**
- **South Dakota**
- **Texas**
- **Utah**
- **Vermont**
- **Virginia**
- **Washington**
- **Wyoming**

“National Averages” have been developed for numerous strategically important parks and recreation planning and management issues including: customer satisfaction and usage of parks and programs; methods for receiving marketing information; reasons that prevent members of households from using parks and recreation facilities more often; priority recreation programs, parks, facilities and trails to improve or develop; priority programming spaces to have in planned community centers and aquatic facilities; potential attendance for planned indoor community centers and outdoor aquatic centers; etc.

Results from household responses for Porter County were compared to National Benchmarks to gain further strategic information. A summary of all tabular comparisons are shown on pages 3-7.

Note: The benchmarking data contained in this report is protected intellectual property. Any reproduction of the benchmarking information in this report by persons or organizations not directly affiliated with Porter County is not authorized without written consent from Leisure Vision/ETC Institute.

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys		
	National Average	Porter County
Have you or members of your household visited any City/County/ Park District <u>parks</u> over the past year?		
	Yes	72%
	No	28%
		94%
		6%
How would you rate the quality of all the <u>parks</u> you've visited?		
	Excellent	31%
	Good	26%
	Fair	54%
	Poor	12%
	Don't know	2%
		1%
		0%
Organizations used for parks and recreation programs and facilities		
	National Lakeshore	NA
	Indiana Dunes State Park	NA
	Porter County Parks and Rec Dept.	48%
	City facilities in Porter County	NA
	Public schools	28%
	YMCA	17%
	Dept. of Natural Resources land	NA
	Private health and fitness clubs	22%
	Township facilities in Porter County	NA
	Boys and Girls Club	4%
	Girl Scouts	6%
	Boy Scouts	7%
	4-H Club	NA
		63%
		62%
		60%
		41%
		38%
		32%
		29%
		20%
		19%
		8%
		6%
		6%
		5%

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys		
	National Average	Porter County
Reasons preventing the use of parks and recreation facilities and programs more often		
I do not know what's being offered	23%	31%
I do not know locations of parks	15%	23%
Not enough special events	NA	15%
Lack of connective trails	NA	13%
Use facilities in cities	8%	12%
Fees are too high	13%	12%
Security is insufficient	9%	12%
Programs we want are not offered	13%	11%
Lack of parking	4%	11%
Lack of facilities in townships	NA	10%
Park operating hours not convenient	NA	9%
Parks are too far from residence	13%	8%
Parks and facilities are too crowded	6%	8%
Parks are not well maintained	4%	8%
Facilities are not well maintained	6%	8%
Lack of access	3%	7%
Lack of transportation	3%	5%

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys		
	National Average	Porter County
Parks and recreation facilities that respondent households have a need for		
Walking and hiking trails	69%	78%
Lake front parks	NA	65%
Nature trails	54%	65%
Swimming and sunbathing beaches	52%	63%
Picnicking areas and shelters	53%	62%
Children's playgrounds	43%	58%
Biking trails	50%	56%
Fishing areas	32%	48%
Nature interpretive centers	50%	41%
Waterparks and waterslides	NA	40%
Amphitheaters	35%	38%
Overnight camping areas	NA	35%
Working farms parks	NA	33%
Outdoor ice skating areas	27%	33%
Boating and sailing areas	28%	31%
Dog parks	26%	28%
Toboggan runs	NA	25%
Mountain biking trails	21%	20%
Tennis courts	26%	18%
Cross-country skiing	NA	18%
Skate park	13%	15%
Platform tennis courts	NA	13%
Disc golf	13%	12%
Equestrian trails	10%	7%
Equestrian center	11%	7%
Bicycle motocross track	9%	7%

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys		
	National Average	Porter County
Most important parks and recreation facilities (sum of top choices)		
Walking and hiking trails	42%	53%
Swimming and sunbathing beaches	23%	32%
Biking trails	24%	28%
Nature trails	20%	25%
Lake front parks	NA	25%
Children's playgrounds	21%	23%
Picnicking areas and shelters	17%	22%
Fishing areas	11%	19%
Overnight camping areas	NA	13%
Waterparks/waterslides	NA	11%
Boating and sailing areas	8%	11%
Dog parks	12%	10%
Amphitheaters	9%	9%
Outdoor ice skating areas	6%	8%
Mountain biking trails	6%	6%
Working farms parks	NA	5%
Nature interpretive centers	16%	5%
Toboggan runs	NA	4%
Tennis courts	7%	3%
Cross-country skiing	NA	3%
Skate park	3%	2%
Equestrian center	3%	2%
Disc golf	3%	2%
Equestrian trails	2%	1%
Platform tennis courts	NA	1%
Bicycle motocross track	2%	1%

Parks and Recreation Benchmarking for Needs Assessment Surveys		
	National Average	Porter County
Most Important Benefits for Respondent Households (sum of top 3 choices)		
Improve physical health and fitness	51%	59%
Make Porter County a more desirable place to live	43%	37%
Protect water quality	26%	31%
Preserve open space and the environment	33%	31%
Improve mental health and reduce stress	21%	27%
Increase property values in surrounding area	27%	26%
Develop recreation trails connecting parks	NA	25%
Protect historical attributes of Porter County	11%	13%
Help attract new residents and businesses	10%	8%
Promote tourism to Porter County	5%	6%
Importance of making improvements to existing parks and recreation facilities compared to other priorities		
Very Important	39%	33%
Somewhat Important	43%	50%
Not Sure	9%	7%
Not Important	9%	10%

Q1 From the following list, please check ALL the outdoor parks, trails, open space and recreation facilities you or members of your household have used or visited in City, County, State and National parks that are located in Porter County over the past 12 months.

Q1. Check all outdoor parks/trails/open space/
rec facilities visited in past 12 months

	Number	Percent
01=Walking/hiking/biking trails	269	67.1
02=Nature trails	192	47.9
03=Equestrian trails	15	3.7
04=Mountain biking trails	42	10.5
05=Amphitheaters	84	20.9
06=Waterparks/waterslides	89	22.2
07=Fishing areas	138	34.4
08=Boating areas	97	24.2
09=Swimming areas	221	55.1
10=Lake front parks	221	55.1
11=Sand dunes	280	69.8
12=Picnic areas	176	43.9
13=Youth baseball fields	87	21.7
14=Dog parks	62	15.5
15=Softball fields	70	17.5
16=18 & 9-hole golf	92	22.9
17=Fairgrounds	263	65.6
18=Soccer fields	84	20.9
19=Natural areas	170	42.4
20=Interpretive center	76	19.0
21=Cross-country skiing	20	5.0
22=Ice skating/hockey	35	8.7
23=Toboggan runs	26	6.5
24=Overnight camping	69	17.2
25=Disc golf	32	8.0
26=Playgrounds	201	50.1
27=Other	16	4.0
28=None	23	5.7
Total	3154	

Q1 Other

Q1. Other	Number	Percent
ANTIQUE POWER SHOW	1	6.3
BASKETBALL COURT	1	6.3
BRINKA-CROSS	1	6.3
CITY PARKS	1	6.3
GARDENS	1	6.3
HORSE CAMPING	1	6.3
OGDEN GARDENS	1	6.3
PINES SKIING	1	6.3
PORTAGE MARINA/IMAGINATION	1	6.3
ROLLER SKATING	1	6.3
SCHOOL FIELD TRIPS/SPEAKERS	1	6.3
SHELTERS	1	6.3
SLEDDING AREAS	1	6.3
SLEDDING HILL; FIELD STATION	1	6.3
SLEDDING HILLS	1	6.3
TALTREE ARB	1	6.3

Q2 Which THREE of the parks and recreation facilities listed in Question #1 do you and members of your household visit the most often?

Q2. Which three parks and rec facilities do you and your household visit most often	Number	Percent
01=Walking/hiking/biking trails	95	23.7
02=Nature trails	9	2.2
03=Equestrian trails	1	0.2
04=Mountain biking trails	2	0.5
05=Amphitheaters	4	1.0
06=Waterparks/waterslides	2	0.5
07=Fishing areas	17	4.2
08=Boating areas	7	1.7
09=Swimming areas	34	8.5
10=Lake front parks	25	6.2
11=Sand dunes	36	9.0
12=Picnic areas	6	1.5
13=Youth baseball fields	7	1.7
14=Dog parks	4	1.0
15=Softball fields	6	1.5
16=18 & 9-hole golf	20	5.0
17=Fairgrounds	15	3.7
18=Soccer fields	9	2.2
19=Natural areas	2	0.5
21=Cross-country skiing	1	0.2
24=Overnight camping	4	1.0
26=Playgrounds	45	11.2
27=Other	2	0.5
00=None chosen	48	12.0
Total	401	100.0

Q2 Which THREE of the parks and recreation facilities listed in Question #1 do you and members of your household visit the most often?

<u>Q2. 2nd most often</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
01=Walking/hiking/biking trails	49	12.2
02=Nature trails	26	6.5
03=Equestrian trails	2	0.5
04=Mountain biking trails	6	1.5
05=Amphitheaters	6	1.5
06=Waterparks/waterslides	7	1.7
07=Fishing areas	14	3.5
08=Boating areas	10	2.5
09=Swimming areas	33	8.2
10=Lake front parks	25	6.2
11=Sand dunes	37	9.2
12=Picnic areas	15	3.7
13=Youth baseball fields	10	2.5
14=Dog parks	6	1.5
15=Softball fields	4	1.0
16=18 & 9-hole golf	11	2.7
17=Fairgrounds	23	5.7
18=Soccer fields	5	1.2
19=Natural areas	4	1.0
20=Interpretive center	2	0.5
22=Ice skating/hockey	2	0.5
23=Toboggan runs	3	0.7
24=Overnight camping	4	1.0
25=Disc golf	1	0.2
26=Playgrounds	31	7.7
27=Other	3	0.7
00=None chosen	62	15.5
Total	401	100.0

Q2 Which THREE of the parks and recreation facilities listed in Question #1 do you and members of your household visit the most often?

<u>Q2. 3rd most often</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
01=Walking/hiking/biking trails	29	7.2
02=Nature trails	21	5.2
03=Equestrian trails	1	0.2
04=Mountain biking trails	1	0.2
05=Amphitheaters	9	2.2
06=Waterparks/waterslides	7	1.7
07=Fishing areas	24	6.0
08=Boating areas	6	1.5
09=Swimming areas	27	6.7
10=Lake front parks	12	3.0
11=Sand dunes	33	8.2
12=Picnic areas	10	2.5
13=Youth baseball fields	6	1.5
14=Dog parks	7	1.7
15=Softball fields	9	2.2
16=18 & 9-hole golf	7	1.7
17=Fairgrounds	29	7.2
18=Soccer fields	14	3.5
19=Natural areas	20	5.0
20=Interpretive center	3	0.7
22=Ice skating/hockey	4	1.0
23=Toboggan runs	1	0.2
24=Overnight camping	7	1.7
25=Disc golf	2	0.5
26=Playgrounds	28	7.0
27=Other	2	0.5
00=None chosen	82	20.4
Total	401	100.0

Q2 Which THREE of the parks and recreation facilities listed in Question #1 do you and members of your household visit the most often? (Top Three)

Sum of top 3 choices

Q2. Which three parks and rec facilities do you and your household visit most often	Number	Percent
01=Walking/hiking/biking trails	173	43.1
02=Nature trails	56	14.0
03=Equestrian trails	4	1.0
04=Mountain biking trails	9	2.2
05=Amphitheaters	19	4.7
06=Waterparks/waterslides	16	4.0
07=Fishing areas	55	13.7
08=Boating areas	23	5.7
09=Swimming areas	94	23.4
10=Lake front parks	62	15.5
11=Sand dunes	106	26.4
12=Picnic areas	31	7.7
13=Youth baseball fields	23	5.7
14=Dog parks	17	4.2
15=Softball fields	19	4.7
16=18 & 9-hole golf	38	9.5
17=Fairgrounds	67	16.7
18=Soccer fields	28	7.0
19=Natural areas	26	6.5
20=Interpretive center	5	1.2
21=Cross-country skiing	1	0.2
22=Ice skating/hockey	6	1.5
23=Toboggan runs	4	1.0
24=Overnight camping	15	3.7
25=Disc golf	3	0.7
26=Playgrounds	104	25.9
27=Other	7	1.7
00=None chosen	48	12.0
Total	1059	

Q3 From the following list, please check ALL the Porter County Parks and Recreation sites you or members of your household have visited over the past 12 months.

Q3. Check all Porter County Parks and Recreation sites visited in the past 12 months

	Number	Percent
0=None chosen	124	30.9
1=Sunset Hills	232	57.9
2=Brincka Cross	17	4.2
3=Calumet Trail	102	25.4
4=Dunn's Bridge	47	11.7
Total	522	

Q4 Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of ALL the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department sites you have visited?

Q4. Rate the physical condition of all Porter County Parks and Recreation sites visited

	Number	Percent
1=Excellent	98	24.5
2=Good	240	60.0
3=Fair	30	7.5
4=Poor	2	0.5
9=Not provided	30	7.5
Total	400	100.0

Q4 Overall, how would you rate the physical condition of ALL the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department sites you have visited?

Excluding "Not Provided"

Q4. Rate the physical condition of all Porter County Parks and Recreation sites visited

	Number	Percent
1=Excellent	98	26.5
2=Good	240	64.9
3=Fair	30	8.1
4=Poor	2	0.5
Total	370	100.0

Q5 From the following list, please check ALL the organizations that you and members of your household have used for outdoor and indoor parks and recreation activities during the last 12 months.

Q5. Check all organizations used for outdoor/
indoor parks/rec activities in past 12 months

	Number	Percent
00=Not provided	42	10.5
01=City facilities	166	41.4
02=Township facilities	75	18.7
03=Porter County Parks/Rec	239	59.6
04=DNR land	117	29.2
05=National Lakeshore	252	62.8
06=Private health clubs	79	19.7
07=Girl Scouts	24	6.0
08=Public schools	152	37.9
09=Boys/Girls Club	31	7.7
10=YMCA	128	31.9
11=Indiana Dunes	249	62.1
12=Boy Scouts	22	5.5
13=4-H Club	19	4.7
Total	1595	

Q6 The Porter County Parks and Recreation Commission has many options regarding acquiring and developing open space for parks and recreation purposes. From the following list, please check the TWO open space options that you and members of your household would support the most. (Top Two)

Q6. Check the two open space options that your
household would support the most

	Number	Percent
A=Left undeveloped	175	43.6
B=Improve/passive usage	203	50.6
C=Improve/active usage	76	19.0
D=Passive & active usages	176	43.9
E=No new space	48	12.0
Z=Not provided	11	2.7
Total	689	

Q7 Please CHECK ALL the reasons that prevent you or other members of your household from using parks, trails, recreation facilities or programs of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department more often.

Q7. Check all reasons preventing you from using parks/trails/rec facilities more often	Number	Percent
00=None chosen	94	23.4
01=Parks not maintained	31	7.7
02=Facilities not maintained	31	7.7
03=Lack connective trails	53	13.2
04=Insufficient security	48	12.0
05=Lack of transportation	18	4.5
06=Lack of access	28	7.0
07=Too crowded	32	8.0
08=Lack of special events	59	14.7
09=Programs not offered	44	11.0
10=Don't know locations	91	22.7
11=Don't know what's offered	126	31.4
12=Use facilities in cities	49	12.2
13=Lack facilities in townships	39	9.7
14=Operating hrs inconvenient	36	9.0
15=Too far from residence	33	8.2
16=Fees too high	49	12.2
17=Lack of parking	43	10.7
Total	904	

Q8 Please indicate if YOU or any member of your HOUSEHOLD has a need for each of the OUTDOOR parks, trails, and recreational facilities listed below by circling the YES or NO next to the park/facility.

(N=401)

	Yes 1	No 2
Q8a. Walking and hiking trails	77.5	22.5
Q8b. Biking trails	55.5	44.5
Q8c. Equestrian trails	7.3	92.8
Q8d. Mountain biking trails	19.5	80.5
Q8e. Nature trails	64.8	35.3
Q8f. Waterparks and waterslides	39.5	60.5
Q8g. Boating and sailing areas	31.3	68.8
Q8h. Fishing areas	47.8	52.3
Q8i. Swimming and sunbathing beaches	62.5	37.5
Q8j. Dog parks	28.3	71.8
Q8k. Skate park	15.3	84.8
Q8l. Equestrian center	6.8	93.3
Q8m. Bicycle motocross track	6.5	93.5
Q8n. Amphitheaters	37.8	62.3
Q8o. Platform tennis courts	12.5	87.5
Q8p. Lake front parks	65.3	34.8
Q8q. Working farm parks	33.3	66.8
Q8r. Tennis courts	18.3	81.8
Q8s. Nature interpretive centers	40.8	59.3
Q8t. Disc golf	12.3	87.8
Q8u. Cross country skiing	17.5	82.5
Q8v. Outdoor ice-skating areas	33.0	67.0
Q8w. Toboggan runs	25.3	74.8
Q8x. Overnight camping areas	35.3	64.8
Q8y. Picnicking areas and shelters	62.3	37.8
Q8-1. Children's playgrounds	57.5	42.5

Q8 If YES, please rate ALL the following parks and recreation FACILITIES of this type in Porter County on a scale of 5 to 1, where 5 means "100% Meets Needs" and 1 means "Does Not Meet Needs" of your household.

(N=401)

	100% met 5	75% met 4	50% met 3	25% met 2	0% met 1
Q8a-. Walking and hiking trails	38.7	33.1	21.2	6.0	1.0
Q8b-. Biking trails	31.5	29.2	22.2	13.0	4.2
Q8c-. Equestrian trails	11.5	15.4	19.2	19.2	34.6
Q8d-. Mountain biking trails	16.2	23.0	24.3	18.9	17.6
Q8e-. Nature trails	36.5	34.5	18.9	9.6	0.4
Q8f-. Waterparks and waterslides	24.4	19.9	16.7	10.9	28.2
Q8g-. Boating and sailing areas	31.9	27.7	17.6	12.6	10.1
Q8h-. Fishing areas	27.4	29.1	25.7	15.6	2.2
Q8i-. Swimming and sunbathing beaches	40.1	30.6	16.9	9.9	2.5
Q8j-. Dog parks	22.5	17.6	22.5	15.7	21.6
Q8k-. Skate park	20.7	22.4	19.0	20.7	17.2
Q8l-. Equestrian center	16.0	12.0	4.0	32.0	36.0
Q8m-. Bicycle motocross track	4.0	24.0	24.0	8.0	40.0
Q8n-. Amphitheaters	27.8	19.4	29.9	10.4	12.5
Q8o-. Platform tennis courts	34.0	17.0	14.9	12.8	21.3
Q8p-. Lake front parks	40.5	31.0	20.2	6.3	2.0
Q8q-. Working farm parks	29.0	24.2	21.8	12.1	12.9
Q8r-. Tennis courts	26.9	20.9	26.9	13.4	11.9
Q8s-. Nature interpretive centers	30.3	34.2	21.7	8.6	5.3
Q8t-. Disc golf	22.4	26.5	26.5	14.3	10.2
Q8u-. Cross country skiing	11.3	17.7	24.2	22.6	24.2
Q8v-. Outdoor ice-skating areas	15.9	8.7	23.8	19.8	31.7
Q8w-. Toboggan runs	13.4	15.5	20.6	19.6	30.9
Q8x-. Overnight camping areas	22.1	24.4	32.1	12.2	9.2
Q8y-. Picnicking areas and shelters	37.0	39.1	16.8	6.3	0.8
Q8-1-. Children's playgrounds	49.3	32.1	12.2	4.5	1.8

Q9 Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question #8 are most important for you and members of your household to be provided in Porter County?

Q9. Which four facilities are most important to you and members of your household	Number	Percent
A=Walking/hiking trails	115	28.7
B=Biking trails	23	5.7
C=Equestrian trails	4	1.0
D=Mountain biking trails	8	2.0
E=Nature trails	10	2.5
F=Waterparks/slides	9	2.2
G=Boating/sailing areas	16	4.0
H=Fishing areas	13	3.2
I=Swimming/sunbathing	38	9.5
J=Dog parks	4	1.0
K=Skate park	3	0.7
M=Bicycle motocross	1	0.2
N=Amphitheaters	9	2.2
P=Lake front parks	15	3.7
Q=Working farm parks	1	0.2
R=Tennis courts	1	0.2
S=Interpretive centers	2	0.5
T=Disc golf	1	0.2
U=Cross-country skiing	2	0.5
V=Outdoor ice-skating	5	1.2
W=Toboggan runs	2	0.5
X=Overnight camping	11	2.7
Y=Picnic areas	17	4.2
1=Playgrounds	41	10.2
Z=None chosen	50	12.5
Total	401	100.0

Q9 Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question #8 are most important for you and members of your household to be provided in Porter County?

Q9. 2nd most important	Number	Percent
A=Walking/hiking trails	53	13.2
B=Biking trails	48	12.0
D=Mountain biking trails	2	0.5
E=Nature trails	36	9.0
F=Waterparks/slides	9	2.2
G=Boating/sailing areas	10	2.5
H=Fishing areas	25	6.2
I=Swimming/sunbathing	33	8.2
J=Dog parks	11	2.7
L=Equestrian ctr	5	1.2
M=Bicycle motocross	1	0.2
N=Amphitheaters	5	1.2
O=Platform tennis courts	1	0.2
P=Lake front parks	25	6.2
Q=Working farm parks	4	1.0
R=Tennis courts	3	0.7
S=Interpretive centers	1	0.2
T=Disc golf	2	0.5
U=Cross-country skiing	3	0.7
V=Outdoor ice-skating	9	2.2
W=Toboggan runs	2	0.5
X=Overnight camping	12	3.0
Y=Picnic areas	22	5.5
1=Playgrounds	18	4.5
Z=None chosen	61	15.2
Total	401	100.0

Q9 Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question #8 are most important for you and members of your household to be provided in Porter County?

Q9. 3rd most important	Number	Percent
A=Walking/hiking trails	22	5.5
B=Biking trails	29	7.2
C=Equestrian trails	1	0.2
D=Mountain biking trails	4	1.0
E=Nature trails	29	7.2
F=Waterparks/slides	17	4.2
G=Boating/sailing areas	10	2.5
H=Fishing areas	20	5.0
I=Swimming/sunbathing	39	9.7
J=Dog parks	14	3.5
K=Skate park	4	1.0
L=Equestrian ctr	2	0.5
M=Bicycle motocross	3	0.7
N=Amphitheaters	10	2.5
O=Platform tennis courts	2	0.5
P=Lake front parks	33	8.2
Q=Working farm parks	7	1.7
R=Tennis courts	5	1.2
S=Interpretive centers	8	2.0
T=Disc golf	3	0.7
V=Outdoor ice-skating	4	1.0
W=Toboggan runs	3	0.7
X=Overnight camping	19	4.7
Y=Picnic areas	20	5.0
1=Playgrounds	17	4.2
Z=None chosen	76	19.0
Total	401	100.0

Q9 Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question #8 are most important for you and members of your household to be provided in Porter County?

Q9. 4th most important	Number	Percent
A=Walking/hiking trails	23	5.7
B=Biking trails	14	3.5
C=Equestrian trails	1	0.2
D=Mountain biking trails	8	2.0
E=Nature trails	26	6.5
F=Waterparks/slides	9	2.2
G=Boating/sailing areas	6	1.5
H=Fishing areas	19	4.7
I=Swimming/sunbathing	20	5.0
J=Dog parks	12	3.0
K=Skate park	2	0.5
M=Bicycle motocross	1	0.2
N=Amphitheaters	13	3.2
O=Platform tennis courts	3	0.7
P=Lake front parks	28	7.0
Q=Working farm parks	10	2.5
R=Tennis courts	3	0.7
S=Interpretive centers	10	2.5
T=Disc golf	1	0.2
U=Cross-country skiing	6	1.5
V=Outdoor ice-skating	14	3.5
W=Toboggan runs	8	2.0
X=Overnight camping	9	2.2
Y=Picnic areas	28	7.0
1=Playgrounds	18	4.5
Z=None chosen	109	27.2
Total	401	100.0

Q9 Which FOUR of the facilities from the list in Question #8 are most important for you and members of your household to be provided in Porter County? (Top Four)

Sum of top 4 choices

Q9. Which four facilities are most important to you and members of your household	Number	Percent
A=Walking/hiking trails	213	53.1
B=Biking trails	114	28.4
C=Equestrian trails	6	1.5
D=Mountain biking trails	22	5.5
E=Nature trails	101	25.2
F=Waterparks/slides	44	11.0
G=Boating/sailing areas	42	10.5
H=Fishing areas	77	19.2
I=Swimming/sunbathing	130	32.4
J=Dog parks	41	10.2
K=Skate park	9	2.2
L=Equestrian ctr	7	1.7
M=Bicycle motocross	6	1.5
N=Amphitheaters	37	9.2
O=Platform tennis courts	6	1.5
P=Lake front parks	101	25.2
Q=Working farm parks	22	5.5
R=Tennis courts	12	3.0
S=Interpretive centers	21	5.2
T=Disc golf	7	1.7
U=Cross-country skiing	11	2.7
V=Outdoor ice-skating	32	8.0
W=Toboggan runs	15	3.7
X=Overnight camping	51	12.7
Y=Picnic areas	87	21.7
I=Playgrounds	94	23.4
Z=None chosen	50	12.5
Total	1358	

Q10 How supportive are you of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department partnering with cities, schools, and non-profits in Porter County in the development of youth and adult sports fields and programs?

Q10. How supportive are you of the development of youth/adult sports fields/programs	Number	Percent
1=Very supportive	169	42.1
2=Somewhat supportive	133	33.2
3=Not sure	69	17.2
4=Not supportive	21	5.2
9=Not provided	9	2.2
Total	401	100.0

Q10 How supportive are you of the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department partnering with cities, schools, and non-profits in Porter County in the development of youth and adult sports fields and programs?

Excluding “Not Provided”

Q10. How supportive are you of the development of youth/adult sports fields/programs	Number	Percent
1=Very supportive	169	43.1
2=Somewhat supportive	133	33.9
3=Not sure	69	17.6
4=Not supportive	21	5.4
Total	392	100.0

Q11 Currently, there is an extensive system of streams and creeks within Porter County. Knowing that, please indicate whether you are very supportive, somewhat supportive, not sure, or not supportive for the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department to take the following actions.

(N=401)

	Not provided 9	Very supportive 4	Somewhat supportive 3	Not sure 2	Not supportive 1
Q11a. Acquire land along the streams and greenways	3.2	39.9	28.9	16.2	11.7
Q11b. Develop a major connected network of walking/hiking/biking trails along streams	3.7	56.9	21.4	10.2	7.7
Q11c. Provide environmental protection, i.e. storm water management, water quality	2.0	65.3	21.7	7.2	3.7

Q11 Currently, there is an extensive system of streams and creeks within Porter County. Knowing that, please indicate whether you are very supportive, somewhat supportive, not sure, or not supportive for the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department to take the following actions. (Without No Response)

Excluding “Not Provided”

(N=401)

	Very supportive 4	Somewhat supportive 3	Not sure 2	Not supportive 1
Q11a. Acquire land along the streams and greenways	41.2	29.9	16.8	12.1
Q11b. Develop a major connected network of walking/hiking/biking trails along streams	59.1	22.3	10.6	8.0
Q11c. Provide environmental protection, i.e. storm water management, water quality	66.7	22.1	7.4	3.8

Q12 The following are some of the benefits that you and your household may receive from parks, trails, and recreation facilities and services. For each potential benefit, please indicate your level of agreement with the benefits being provided by parks, trails, and recreation facilities by circling the corresponding number.

(N=401)

	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Neutral 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5	Don't know 9
Q12a. Improve physical health and fitness	61.8	27.7	5.0	1.0	1.5	3.0
Q12b. Develop recreation trails connecting parks	44.1	29.2	14.7	3.5	2.5	6.0
Q12c. Make Porter County a more desirable place to live	55.1	26.4	11.0	1.5	2.2	3.7
Q12d. Preserve open space and the environment	50.9	28.7	12.2	2.2	2.0	4.0
Q12e. Increase property values in surrounding areas	44.9	26.2	15.7	3.5	3.5	6.2
Q12f. Improve mental health and reduce stress	52.6	29.9	9.2	1.5	2.2	4.5
Q12g. Protect water quality	57.6	22.4	7.5	3.2	2.5	6.7
Q12h. Help attract new residents and businesses	32.9	29.7	21.2	5.0	4.7	6.5
Q12i. Protect historical attributes of Porter County	43.6	31.9	13.7	3.2	2.5	5.0
Q12j. Promote tourism	37.2	32.9	17.5	3.7	4.7	4.0
Q12k. Other	3.2	0.5	0.2	0.0	0.2	95.8

Q12 The following are some of the benefits that you and your household may receive from parks, trails, and recreation facilities and services. For each potential benefit, please indicate your level of agreement with the benefits being provided by parks, trails, and recreation facilities by circling the corresponding number.

Excluding “Don’t Know”

(N=401)

	Strongly agree 1	Agree 2	Neutral 3	Disagree 4	Strongly disagree 5
Q12a. Improve physical health and fitness	63.8	28.5	5.1	1.0	1.5
Q12b. Develop recreation trails connecting parks	46.9	31.0	15.6	3.7	2.7
Q12c. Make Porter County a more desirable place to live	57.3	27.5	11.4	1.6	2.3
Q12d. Preserve open space and the environment	53.0	29.9	12.7	2.3	2.1
Q12e. Increase property values in surrounding areas	47.9	27.9	16.8	3.7	3.7
Q12f. Improve mental health and reduce stress	55.1	31.3	9.7	1.6	2.3
Q12g. Protect water quality	61.8	24.1	8.0	3.5	2.7
Q12h. Help attract new residents and businesses	35.2	31.7	22.7	5.3	5.1
Q12i. Protect historical attributes of Porter County	45.9	33.6	14.4	3.4	2.6
Q12j. Promote tourism	38.7	34.3	18.2	3.9	4.9
Q12k. Other	76.5	11.8	5.9	0.0	5.9

Q12 Other

<u>Q12k-. Other</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
DEVELOP LAKE FRONT=	1	7.7
ENVIRONMENTAL=	1	7.7
IMPROVE PARK SAFETY=	1	7.7
INC PARKING @ BEACH=	1	7.7
NATURE EDUCATION=	1	7.7
PRESERVE PROP RIGHTS=	1	7.7
PROTECT CLEAN AIR=	1	7.7
QUESTION CONFUSING=	1	7.7
SAVE URBAN FORESTS=	1	7.7
SIDEWALKS TO TRAILS=	1	7.7
SNOWMOBILE TRAILS=	1	7.7
SOCIALIZATION=	1	7.7
WILDLIFE PROTECTION=	1	7.7

Q13 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to you and members of your household?

Q13. Which three benefits are most important to you and members of your household	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	150	37.4
B=Trails connecting parks	29	7.2
C=More desirable place	43	10.7
D=Preserve environment	35	8.7
E=Increase property value	26	6.5
F=Mental health	25	6.2
G=Protect water	30	7.5
H=Attract new residents/business	8	2.0
I=Protect historical attributes	10	2.5
J=Promote tourism	10	2.5
K=Other	2	0.5
Z=None chosen	33	8.2
Total	401	100.0

Q13 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to you and members of your household?

Q13. 2nd most important	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	56	14.0
B=Trails connecting parks	47	11.7
C=More desirable place	61	15.2
D=Preserve environment	46	11.5
E=Increase property value	38	9.5
F=Mental health	45	11.2
G=Protect water	38	9.5
H=Attract new residents/business	12	3.0
I=Protect historical attributes	9	2.2
J=Promote tourism	2	0.5
K=Other	1	0.2
Z=None chosen	46	11.5
Total	401	100.0

Q13 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to you and members of your household?

Q13. 3rd most important	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	31	7.7
B=Trails connecting parks	25	6.2
C=More desirable place	44	11.0
D=Preserve environment	42	10.5
E=Increase property value	41	10.2
F=Mental health	40	10.0
G=Protect water	56	14.0
H=Attract new residents/business	10	2.5
I=Protect historical attributes	35	8.7
J=Promote tourism	13	3.2
K=Other	4	1.0
Z=None chosen	60	15.0
Total	401	100.0

Q13 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to you and members of your household?

Sum of top 3 choices

Q13. Which three benefits are most important to you and members of your household	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	237	59.1
B=Trails connecting parks	101	25.2
C=More desirable place	148	36.9
D=Preserve environment	123	30.7
E=Increase property value	105	26.2
F=Mental health	110	27.4
G=Protect water	124	30.9
H=Attract new residents/business	30	7.5
I=Protect historical attributes	54	13.5
J=Promote tourism	25	6.2
K=Other	7	1.7
Z=None chosen	33	8.2
Total	1097	

Q14 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to the future of Porter County?

Q14. Which three benefits are most important to the future of Porter County	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	52	13.0
B=Trails connecting parks	14	3.5
C=More desirable place	65	16.2
D=Preserve environment	41	10.2
E=Increase property value	32	8.0
F=Mental health	11	2.7
G=Protect water	61	15.2
H=Attract new residents/business	34	8.5
I=Protect historical attributes	20	5.0
J=Promote tourism	29	7.2
K=Other	1	0.2
Z=None chosen	41	10.2
Total	401	100.0

Q14 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to the future of Porter County?

Q14. 2nd most important	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	28	7.0
B=Trails connecting parks	13	3.2
C=More desirable place	39	9.7
D=Preserve environment	41	10.2
E=Increase property value	61	15.2
F=Mental health	24	6.0
G=Protect water	44	11.0
H=Attract new residents/business	38	9.5
I=Protect historical attributes	29	7.2
J=Promote tourism	27	6.7
K=Other	4	1.0
Z=None chosen	53	13.2
Total	401	100.0

Q14 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to the future of Porter County?

Q14. 3rd most important	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	16	4.0
B=Trails connecting parks	12	3.0
C=More desirable place	53	13.2
D=Preserve environment	25	6.2
E=Increase property value	49	12.2
F=Mental health	26	6.5
G=Protect water	47	11.7
H=Attract new residents/business	32	8.0
I=Protect historical attributes	40	10.0
J=Promote tourism	31	7.7
K=Other	2	0.5
Z=None chosen	68	17.0
Total	401	100.0

Q14 Which THREE of the BENEFITS from the list in Question #12 are most important to the future of Porter County?

Sum of top 3 choices

Q14. Which three benefits are most important to the future of Porter County	Number	Percent
A=Health/fitness	96	23.9
B=Trails connecting parks	39	9.7
C=More desirable place	157	39.2
D=Preserve environment	107	26.7
E=Increase property value	142	35.4
F=Mental health	61	15.2
G=Protect water	152	37.9
H=Attract new residents/business	104	25.9
I=Protect historical attributes	89	22.2
J=Promote tourism	87	21.7
K=Other	7	1.7
Z=None chosen	41	10.2
Total	1082	

Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment Survey for Porter County

Q15 For the following programs and activities, please circle the ONE option that best describes how you feel the direct costs for offering the program or activity should be paid.

(N=401)

	100% taxes/0% fees 1	75% taxes/ 25% fees 2	50% taxes/ 50% fees 3	25% taxes/ 75% fees 4	0% taxes/ 100% fees 5	Don't Know 9
Q15a. Special events for families	9.2	11.5	31.2	11.0	18.7	18.5
Q15b. Youth programs (0-12 years of age)	12.0	16.0	28.7	11.2	14.0	18.2
Q15c. Teen programs (13-17 years of age)	9.0	16.2	31.9	12.0	14.7	16.2
Q15d. Adult programs (18-64 years of age)	4.5	10.2	31.9	13.5	23.2	16.7
Q15e. Older adult programs (65+ years of age)	20.0	19.0	24.9	9.7	10.5	16.0
Q15f. Programs for people with disabilities	35.2	15.5	17.5	6.0	8.0	18.0

Q15 For the following programs and activities, please circle the ONE option that best describes how you feel the direct costs for offering the program or activity should be paid. (Without Don't Know)

Excluding "Don't Know"

(N=401)

	100% taxes/0% fees 1	75% taxes/ 25% fees 2	50% taxes/ 50% fees 3	25% taxes/ 75% fees 4	0% taxes/ 100% fees 5
Q15a. Special events for families	11.3	14.1	38.2	13.5	22.9
Q15b. Youth programs (0-12 years of age)	14.6	19.5	35.1	13.7	17.1
Q15c. Teen programs (13-17 years of age)	10.7	19.3	38.1	14.3	17.6
Q15d. Adult programs (18-64 years of age)	5.4	12.3	38.3	16.2	27.8
Q15e. Older adult programs (65+ years of age)	23.7	22.6	29.7	11.6	12.5
Q15f. Programs for people with disabilities	42.9	18.8	21.3	7.3	9.7

Q16 The following are actions that the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department could take to improve the County Parks and Recreation system. Please indicate whether you would be very supportive, somewhat supportive, not sure or not supportive of each action by circling the number next to the action.

(N=401)

	Not provided 9	Very supportive 4	Somewhat supportive 3	Not sure 2	Not supportive 1
Q16a. Acquire land to preserve open space and protect the environment	2.0	50.1	33.4	7.0	7.5
Q16b. Acquire land to develop walking and hiking trails	2.5	49.6	31.9	8.5	7.5
Q16c. Acquire land for developing athletic fields & recreational facilities	2.5	26.4	38.9	16.5	15.7
Q16d. Acquire land to develop a park in South Porter County	2.2	32.9	27.4	23.9	13.5
Q16e. Upgrade/improve Sunset Hills Farm Park	2.2	30.4	36.9	21.9	8.5
Q16f. Develop connected trails	1.7	52.9	26.7	10.2	8.5
Q16g. Provide environmental protection, i.e. flood plain mgmt., improve water quality	1.7	62.3	25.9	7.2	2.7
Q16h. Develop new youth/adult athletic fields/programs in partnership with the cities	2.0	29.9	35.9	19.5	12.7
Q16i. Develop an environmental education center at Sunset Hills Farm Park	2.0	28.2	31.7	26.2	12.0
Q16j. Develop more programs and activities for rural residents of Porter County	1.7	31.2	34.9	22.7	9.5
Q16k. Develop a new off-leash dog park	2.5	21.9	22.9	21.4	31.2
Q16l. Other	87.0	7.2	2.0	2.0	1.7

Q16 The following are actions that the Porter County Parks and Recreation Department could take to improve the County Parks and Recreation system. Please indicate whether you would be very supportive, somewhat supportive, not sure or not supportive of each action by circling the number next to the action.

Excluding “Not provided”

(N=401)

	Very supportive 4	Somewhat supportive 3	Not sure 2	Not supportive 1
Q16a. Acquire land to preserve open space and protect the environment	51.1	34.1	7.1	7.6
Q16b. Acquire land to develop walking and hiking trails	50.9	32.7	8.7	7.7
Q16c. Acquire land for developing athletic fields & recreational facilities	27.1	39.9	16.9	16.1
Q16d. Acquire land to develop a park in South Porter County	33.7	28.1	24.5	13.8
Q16e. Upgrade/improve Sunset Hills Farm Park	31.1	37.8	22.4	8.7
Q16f. Develop connected trails	53.8	27.2	10.4	8.6
Q16g. Provide environmental protection, i.e. flood plain mgmt., improve water quality	63.5	26.4	7.4	2.8
Q16h. Develop new youth/adult athletic fields/ programs in partnership with the cities	30.5	36.6	19.8	13.0
Q16i. Develop an environmental education center at Sunset Hills Farm Park	28.8	32.3	26.7	12.2
Q16j. Develop more programs and activities for rural residents of Porter County	31.7	35.5	23.1	9.6
Q16k. Develop a new off-leash dog park	22.5	23.5	22.0	32.0
Q16l. Other	55.8	15.4	15.4	13.5

Q16 Other

<u>Q16l-. Other</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
ATV TRAILS=	1	2.8
ATV/OFF ROAD AREA=	1	2.8
BASKETBALL FACILITIE=	1	2.8
BETTER LAKE ACCESS=	1	2.8
BETTER STREETS=	1	2.8
BIKE TRAILS=	1	2.8
CANOEING ON RIVER=	1	2.8
DECENT SKATE PARK=	1	2.8
FREE PARKING FORRESIDENTS=	1	2.8
HORSE WELCOME PARKS=	1	2.8
ICE ARENA=	1	2.8
ICE RINK/HOCKEY=	1	2.8
ICE SKATING RING=	1	2.8
ICE SKATING/HOCKEY=	1	2.8
IMP PARKS IN KOUTS=	1	2.8
LAKES PUBLIC ACCESS=	1	2.8
LEASHED DOG PARK=	1	2.8
MAINAIN BEACH FRONT=	1	2.8
MORE HANDICAP FACILILTIES=	1	2.8
OUTDOOR AQUATIC CTR=	1	2.8
OUTDOOR/INDOOR POOL=	1	2.8
PUBLIC SWIMMING POOL=	1	2.8
QUALITY FISHING/HUNT=	1	2.8
REMOVE BIKE LANES=	1	2.8
SAVE URBAN FORESTS=	1	2.8
SECURITY=	1	2.8
SENIOR DIABILITY CTR=	1	2.8
SNOWMOBILE TRAILS=	1	2.8
TAKE CARE OF PARKS=	1	2.8
TOBOGGAN RUNS=	1	2.8
TRANSPORTATION TO VALPARAISO=	1	2.8
WATER FITNESS FACILITIES=	1	2.8
WATER PARK=	1	2.8
WATER PARKS/POOLS=	1	2.8
WATER/ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION=	1	2.8
YEAR ROUND ICE SKATING=	1	2.8

Q17 Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question #16 would you be most willing to fund with your County parks and recreation tax dollars?

Q17. Which four actions would you be most willing to fund with parks & rec tax dollars	Number	Percent
A=Preserve open space	76	19.0
B=Develop trails	52	13.0
C=Develop fields	19	4.7
D=Park in south Porter Cty.	28	7.0
E=Upgrade Sunset Hills	30	7.5
F=Connected trails	35	8.7
G=Environmental protection	46	11.5
H=Develop in partnership	7	1.7
I=Environmental ed center	4	1.0
J=Programs for rural residents	8	2.0
K=Off-leash dog pk	23	5.7
L=Other	21	5.2
Z=None chosen	52	13.0
Total	401	100.0

Q17 Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question #16 would you be most willing to fund with your County parks and recreation tax dollars?

Q17. 2nd choice	Number	Percent
A=Preserve open space	38	9.5
B=Develop trails	66	16.5
C=Develop fields	15	3.7
D=Park in south Porter Cty.	20	5.0
E=Upgrade Sunset Hills	27	6.7
F=Connected trails	60	15.0
G=Environmental protection	47	11.7
H=Develop in partnership	15	3.7
I=Environmental ed center	15	3.7
J=Programs for rural residents	16	4.0
K=Off-leash dog pk	11	2.7
L=Other	4	1.0
Z=None chosen	67	16.7
Total	401	100.0

Q17 Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question #16 would you be most willing to fund with your County parks and recreation tax dollars?

Q17. 3rd choice	Number	Percent
A=Preserve open space	33	8.2
B=Develop trails	42	10.5
C=Develop fields	12	3.0
D=Park in south Porter Cty.	15	3.7
E=Upgrade Sunset Hills	16	4.0
F=Connected trails	70	17.5
G=Environmental protection	42	10.5
H=Develop in partnership	25	6.2
I=Environmental ed center	23	5.7
J=Programs for rural residents	16	4.0
K=Off-leash dog pk	9	2.2
L=Other	4	1.0
Z=None chosen	94	23.4
Total	401	100.0

Q17 Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question #16 would you be most willing to fund with your County parks and recreation tax dollars?

Q17. 4th choice	Number	Percent
A=Preserve open space	24	6.0
B=Develop trails	20	5.0
C=Develop fields	18	4.5
D=Park in south Porter Cty.	14	3.5
E=Upgrade Sunset Hills	15	3.7
F=Connected trails	20	5.0
G=Environmental protection	53	13.2
H=Develop in partnership	23	5.7
I=Environmental ed center	25	6.2
J=Programs for rural residents	28	7.0
K=Off-leash dog pk	23	5.7
L=Other	3	0.7
Z=None chosen	135	33.7
Total	401	100.0

Q17 Which FOUR of the actions from the list in Question #16 would you be most willing to fund with your County parks and recreation tax dollars?

Sum of top 4 choices

Q17. Which four actions would you be most willing to fund with parks & rec tax dollars

	Number	Percent
A=Preserve open space	171	42.6
B=Develop trails	180	44.9
C=Develop fields	64	16.0
D=Park in south Porter Cty.	77	19.2
E=Upgrade Sunset Hills	88	21.9
F=Connected trails	185	46.1
G=Environmental protection	188	46.9
H=Develop in partnership	70	17.5
I=Environmental ed center	67	16.7
J=Programs for rural residents	68	17.0
K=Off-leash dog pk	66	16.5
L=Other	32	8.0
Z=None chosen	348	86.8
Total	1604	

Q18 If an additional \$100 were available for Porter County Parks and Recreation Department to fund parks, trails, sports, and recreation facilities, how would you allocate the funds among the categories of funding listed below?

	Mean	Total	Sum
Q18a. Improvements/maintenance of Sunset Hills Farm Park	16.13	384	6193
Q18b. Acquisition of new park land and open space	16.94	384	6506
Q18c. Construction of new sports fields (softball, soccer, baseball, etc.)	8.69	384	3337
Q18d. Development of an indoor environmental education center	9.89	384	3796
Q18e. Acquisition and development of walking and biking trails	24.39	384	9367
Q18f. Development of passive facilities (picnic areas, playgrounds, etc.)	17.46	384	6705
Q18g. Other	6.46	384	2480

Q18 Other

<u>Q18g-. Other</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
BASKETBALL FACILITIES=	1	2.2
BOAT RAMPS=	1	2.2
CAMPING/WINTER ACTIVITIES=	1	2.2
CANOEING=	1	2.2
COMMUNITY OUTDOOR POOL=	1	2.2
CREATE MOUNTAIN BIKE TRAILS=	1	2.2
DEVELOP IMPROVEMENT AT FAIRGROUNDS=	1	2.2
DEVELOP SOUTH SHORE AREA=	1	2.2
DOG PARK=	3	6.5
FISHING AREAS/MAINTENANCE=	1	2.2
FLOOD PROBLEMS!=	1	2.2
HORSE WELCOME PARK=	1	2.2
ICE ARENA=	1	2.2
ICE RINK; HOCKEY=	1	2.2
ICE SKATING RINK=	1	2.2
ICE SKATING/HOCKEY RINK=	1	2.2
IMPROVE BRINCKA-CROSS GARDENS=	1	2.2
IMPROVE CITY OF KOUTS POOL=	1	2.2
IMPROVE EXISTING FACILITIES=	1	2.2
LOWER TAXES=	1	2.2
MAINTAIN/PRESERVE URBAN FORESTS=	1	2.2
MAINTAIN WHAT WE HAVE=	1	2.2
MAINTAINING LAKE SHORE=	1	2.2
PAY OFF OTHER CITY DEBTS=	1	2.2
PROTECT WILDLIFE=	1	2.2
PUBLIC ACCESS SITES AT LAKES=	2	4.4
PUBLIC POOL & WINTER REC=	1	2.2
REMOVE BIKE LANE MARKINGS=	1	2.2
SENIOR DISABILITY CENTER=	1	2.2
SENIOR PROGRAMS=	1	2.2
SIDEWALKS=	1	2.2
SKATE PARK=	1	2.2
SNOW HILL & PARKS FOR KIDS=	1	2.2
SNOWMOBILE TRAILS=	1	2.2
SPRINKLER PARK=	1	2.2
SWIMMING POOL=	1	2.2
TAXED TOO MUCH; CUT SPENDING=	1	2.2
TOBOGGAN RUN=	1	2.2
UNDECIDED=	1	2.2
UNSURE=	1	2.2
WATER PARKS & SWIMMING POOLS=	1	2.2
WATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT=	1	2.2

Q19 How supportive would you be of using some of the interest revenues being earned by Porter County from the hospital to acquire, maintain, and develop the types of parks, trails, sports and recreation facilities most important to your household?

Q19. How supportive would you be of using interest revenues to develop parks/trails etc	Number	Percent
1=Very supportive	162	40.4
2=Somewhat supportive	135	33.7
3=Not sure	65	16.2
4=Not supportive	35	8.7
9=Not provided	4	1.0
Total	401	100.0

Q19 How supportive would you be of using some of the interest revenues being earned by Porter County from the hospital to acquire, maintain, and develop the types of parks, trails, sports and recreation facilities most important to your household?

Excluding “Not provided”

Q19. How supportive would you be of using interest revenues to develop parks/trails etc	Number	Percent
1=Very supportive	162	40.8
2=Somewhat supportive	135	34.0
3=Not sure	65	16.4
4=Not supportive	35	8.8
Total	397	100.0

Q20 Compared to other priorities for Porter County, such as public safety, roads, and utilities, how important do you think it is for Porter County to fund improvements to the parks and recreation system?

Q20. Compared to other priorities, how important is it to fund improvements to parks	Number	Percent
1=Very important	130	32.4
2=Somewhat important	196	48.9
3=Not sure	28	7.0
4=Not important	40	10.0
9=Not provided	7	1.7
Total	401	100.0

Q20 Compared to other priorities for Porter County, such as public safety, roads, and utilities, how important do you think it is for Porter County to fund improvements to the parks and recreation system?

Excluding “Not provided”

Q20. Compared to other priorities, how important is it to fund improvements to parks	Number	Percent
1=Very important	130	33.0
2=Somewhat important	196	49.7
3=Not sure	28	7.1
4=Not important	40	10.2
Total	394	100.0

Q21 Counting yourself, how many people in your household are:

	Mean	Sum
number	3.05	1224
Q21. Under 5 years	0.21	83
Q21. 5-9 years	0.21	86
Q21. 10-14 years	0.24	96
Q21. 15-19 years	0.24	98
Q21. 20-24 years	0.20	79
Q21. 25-34 years	0.29	115
Q21. 35-44 years	0.34	137
Q21. 45-54 years	0.57	229
Q21. 55-64 years	0.48	192
Q21. 65+ years	0.27	109

Q22 What is your age?

Q22. What is your age	Number	Percent
34=Under 35	63	15.8
44=35 to 44	69	17.3
54=45 to 54	105	26.3
64=55 to 64	104	26.1
65=65+	58	14.5
Total	399	100.0

Q23 Your gender:

<u>Q23. Your gender</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1=Male	180	44.9
2=Female	221	55.1
Total	401	100.0

Q24 How many years have you lived in Porter County?

<u>Q24. How many years have you lived in Porter County</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
1 to 2	17	4.3
3 to 5	22	5.5
6 to 10	54	13.5
11 to 15	34	8.5
16 to 20	36	9.0
21 to 30	70	17.5
31+	167	41.8
Total	400	100.0



KYLE TELECHAN | THE TIMES

Porter County park manager Matt Howton looks at a billboard of indigenous plants with Valparaiso resident Michael Barrett during a meeting Wednesday at Sunset Hill Farm County Park. The Porter County Parks and Recreation Department is developing a strategic and master plan that will guide the agency until 2017.

Planning for area parks

BY SUSAN EMERY
Times Correspondent

VALPARAISO | High winds and heavy rains couldn't prevent parks fans from turning out Wednesday for the first public input session on Porter County Parks and Recreation's 2012 strategic and master plan.

About 30 residents attended a meeting at Sunset Hill Farm County Park to offer suggestions on programs, operations, development, land acquisition and more.

Parks Superintendent Walter Lenckos said the parks are required to update the master plan every five years to be eligible for state funding. The 2012 plan, due to be finalized in April, will guide the parks until 2017.

In addition to public input sessions and focus groups, several thousand residents will be surveyed at random in the coming months by phone, email and mail.

"The goal is to come up with a list of priorities," said Lenckos, adding that how to pay for those priorities will be included in the plan.

The plan also will identify funding opportunities such as grants. The parks' 2012 budget of more than \$460,000 is

funded through the county's general fund. Another \$300,000 comes from the commissioners' county economic development income tax budget.

A 12-member parks master plan committee has been working since early summer with the Porter County GIS office to collect data about infrastructure, county-owned properties, unprotected wetlands and population density in unincorporated areas.

The data will, among other things, help prevent the parks from duplicating services already offered by schools, libraries, Boys & Girls Clubs and YMCAs, Lenckos said.

The committee has determined 10 strategic issues of importance, including volunteer programs, communication and marketing, balance between active and passive use and programs, park maintenance and operations, program development, program and park development in south Porter County, Brincka Cross garden rehabilitation, Sunset Hill Farm Park development, land acquisition plans and policy, and park and program accessibility.

Making the parks accessible does not just apply to people with physical

disabilities, Lenckos said. Rather, it includes communicating with the Hispanic community, which is the fastest-growing population in the county, and providing written materials in large print for people with sight needs.

Lenckos listed each of the 10 issues on poster paper and asked residents to write comments under each issue, or to write other issues on a blank sheet of paper he provided.

Liberty Township residents Monica Korzenecki and her daughter, Kayla, 13, are park volunteers and meet at Sunset Park for the Liberty Sunsetters 4-H Club.

Korzenecki said her mother is 81 years old and has to drive to Hammond for ballroom dancing. She's hoping the parks will consider developing a ballroom dancing program.

"I would love to have another option for her," she said.

Valparaiso resident Michael Barrett wants to see the parks' Earth Day program expanded.

"The biggest thing we need in Porter County is education (about the environment)," he said.

PORTER COUNTY

Ice skating rink added to list of park priorities

BY JAMES D. WOLF JR.

Post-Tribune correspondent

The residents of Porter County apparently want something from the Parks and Recreation Department that the Master Plan Committee hadn't considered: an ice skating rink.

Of all the suggestions made by more than 30 people at Wednesday's public input session, that got the most support.

The Parks and Recreation staff put up 10 categories on large sheets of paper — ranging from Sunset Hill Farm County Parks to marketing to programming — and residents at the meeting wrote what they wanted.

The idea of a skating rink that could also be used for hockey received the most support stickers from other residents.

Ten people agreed with John Gregurich of Chesterton that a rink "would be a gold mine" for the county.

A former hockey coach in Illinois, Gregurich said South Bend has four crowded rinks, while Chicago has plenty.

However, there are none in the 50-mile area of Northwest Indiana, what he called the most skating-deprived area in the Midwest.

His remarks drew applause at the meeting.

Other items that got a lot of resident approval included making Sunset Hill a working farm (seven support stickers) and an equestrian area in south Porter



Dinner is served at Sunset Hill Farm County Park on Wednesday in Valparaiso. The cookout preceded a public meeting of the park board. |

JEFFREY D. NICHOLLS-POST-TRIBUNE

County, a meeting barn at Sunset Hill and more concerts in Sunset Hill's natural auditorium (each with six stickers).

Acquiring more land and keeping the parks at passive rather than active use also received a lot of support.

This was the first public input session for the Master Plan, which the Indiana Department of Natural Resources requires every five years to be eligible for grants.

"Any good business (makes) plans," Parks Superintendent Walter Lenckos said.

The spring 2012 planning began about five months ago, and the committee was put together, Lenckos said. The members col-

lected data on the county on location of population, of schools and libraries and of forests and wetlands.

"Before you make a plan for the county, you have to know what's there," Lenckos said.

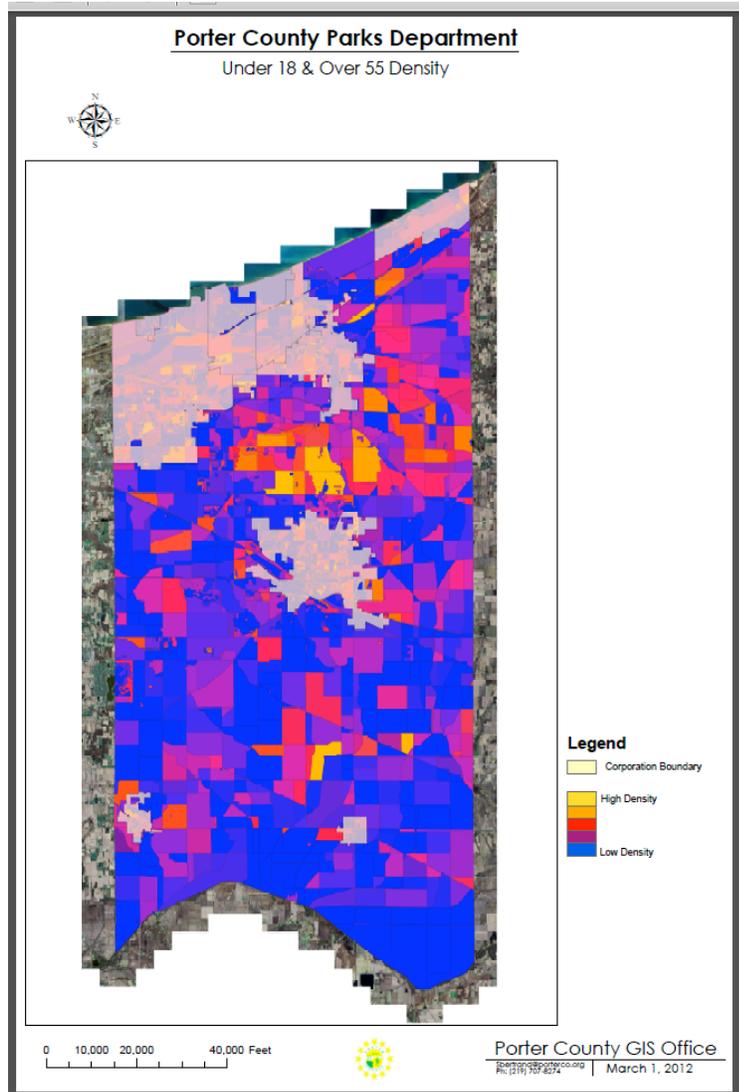
The county's GIS department put the information on a series of maps that should become available online.

Next week, a research company will poll at least 400 county residents by phone, mail and email about what they want from the parks.

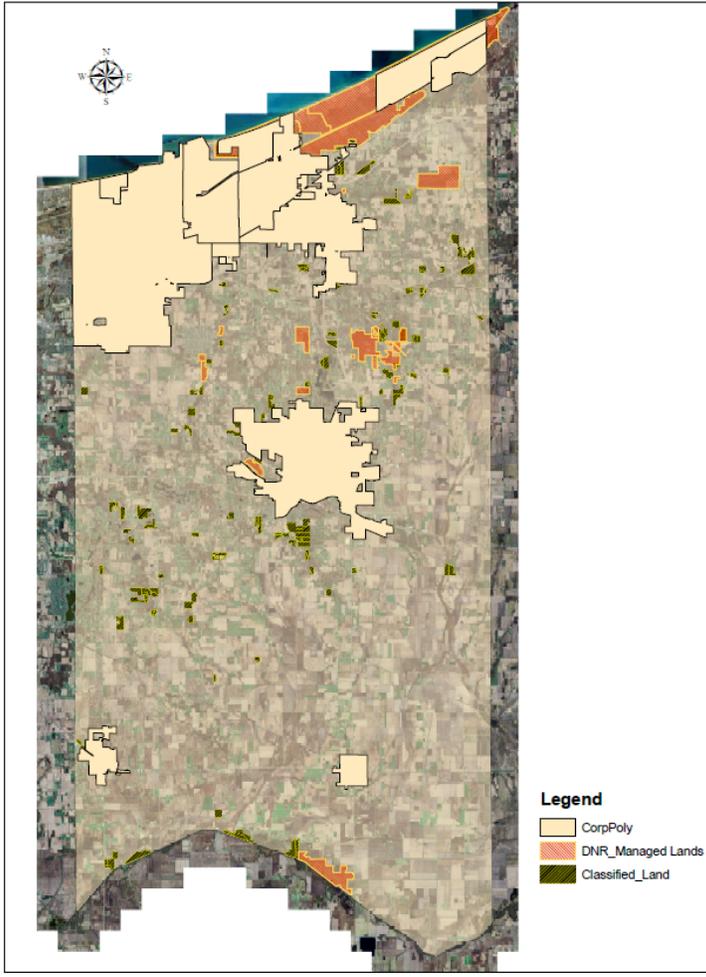
The parks department will present initial findings at its Dec. 1 meeting.

The plan will be sent to the Indiana DNR in April.

Maps



Porter County Parks Department
DNR Protected & Managed Lands



- Legend**
- CorpPoly
 - DNR_Managed Lands
 - Classified_Land

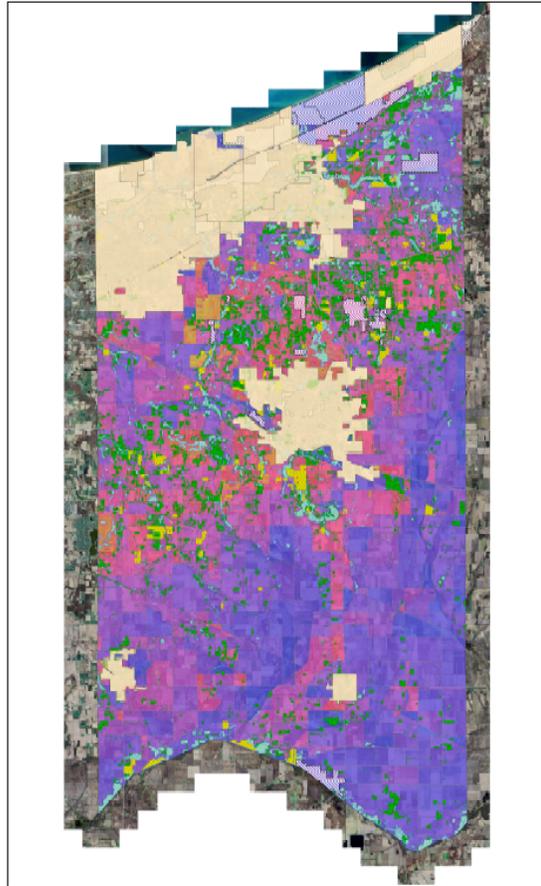
0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet



Porter County GIS Office
Scale: 1:250,000
Ph: (219) 705-8274 | November 15, 2011

Porter County Parks Department

Population Density, Managed, & Unmanaged Lands



Legend

- Corporation Boundary
- High Density
- Medium Density
- Low Density
- DNR_Managed Lands
- Classified_Land
- Wetlands_Unprotected
- Woodlands_Unprotected

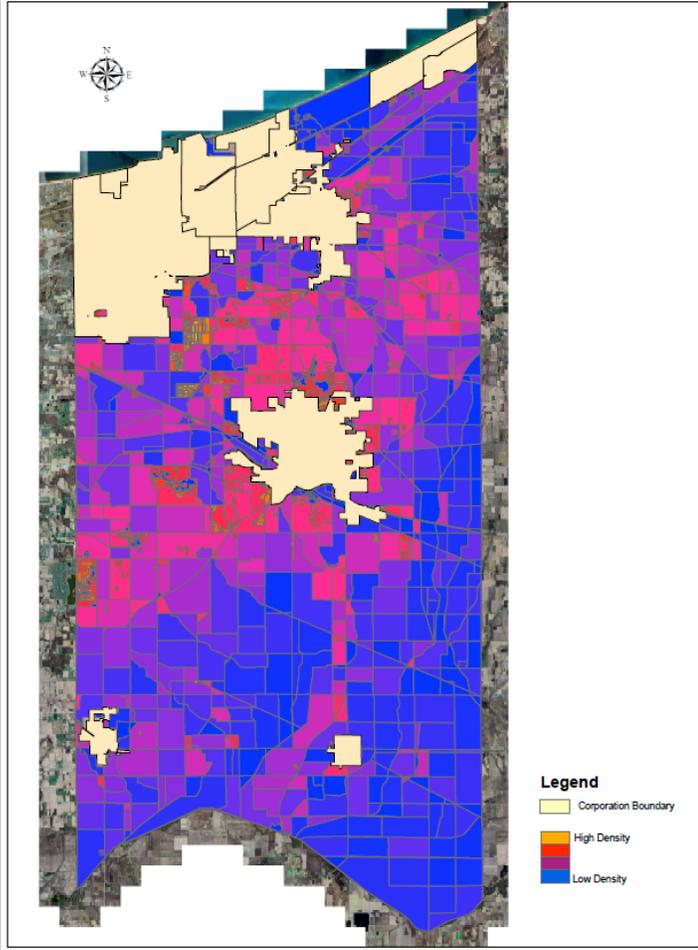
0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet



Porter County GIS Office
gis@portercountyindiana.org
Ph: (219) 705-8274

March 1, 2012

Porter County Parks Department
Unincorporated Population Density



- Legend**
- Corporation Boundary
 - High Density
 - Low Density

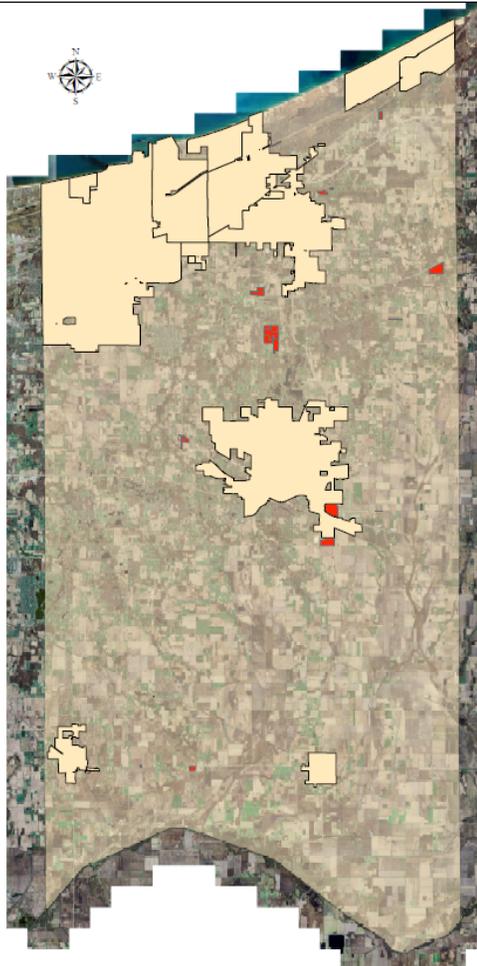
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Porter County GIS Office
scg@portercog.org
Ph: (219) 707-8274

November 15, 2011

Porter County Parks Department
Porter County & Parks Owned Property



Legend

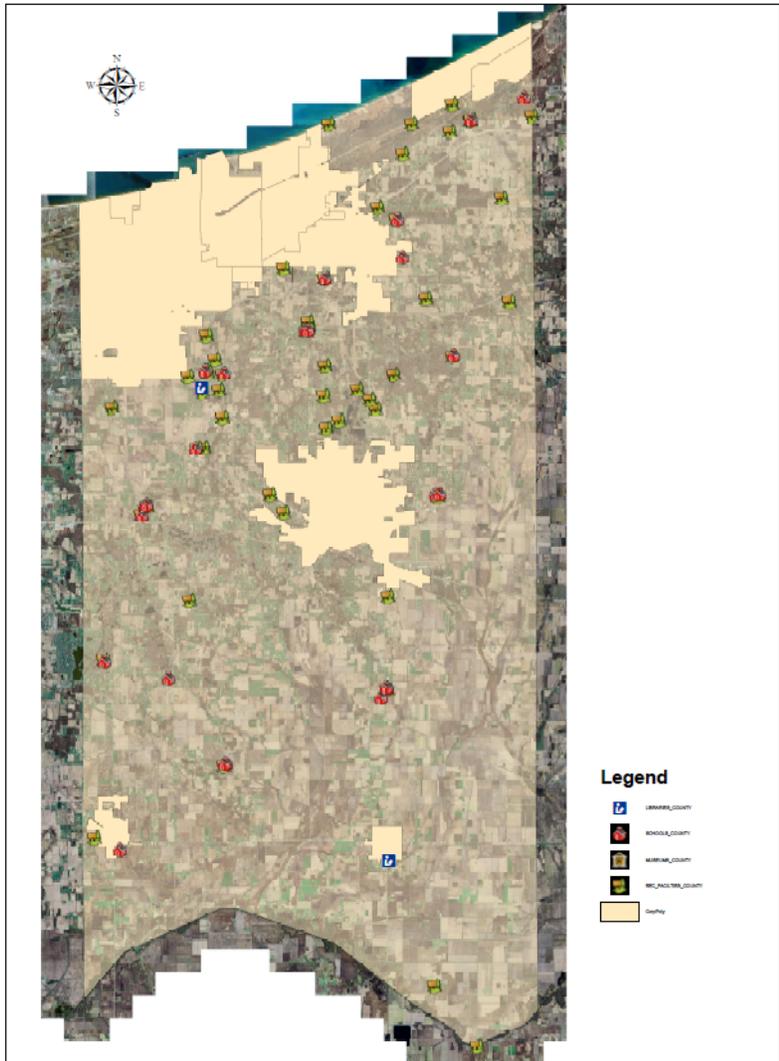
- CorpPoly
- PORTER_OWNED

0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet



Porter County GIS Office
gis@portercounty.org | November 15, 2011
Ph: (219) 707-8274

Porter County Parks Department
Schools Libraries & Recreational Facilities



Legend

- LIBRARY_COUNTY
- SCHOOL_COUNTY
- PARK_COUNTY
- RECREATIONAL_COUNTY
- Overlay

0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet

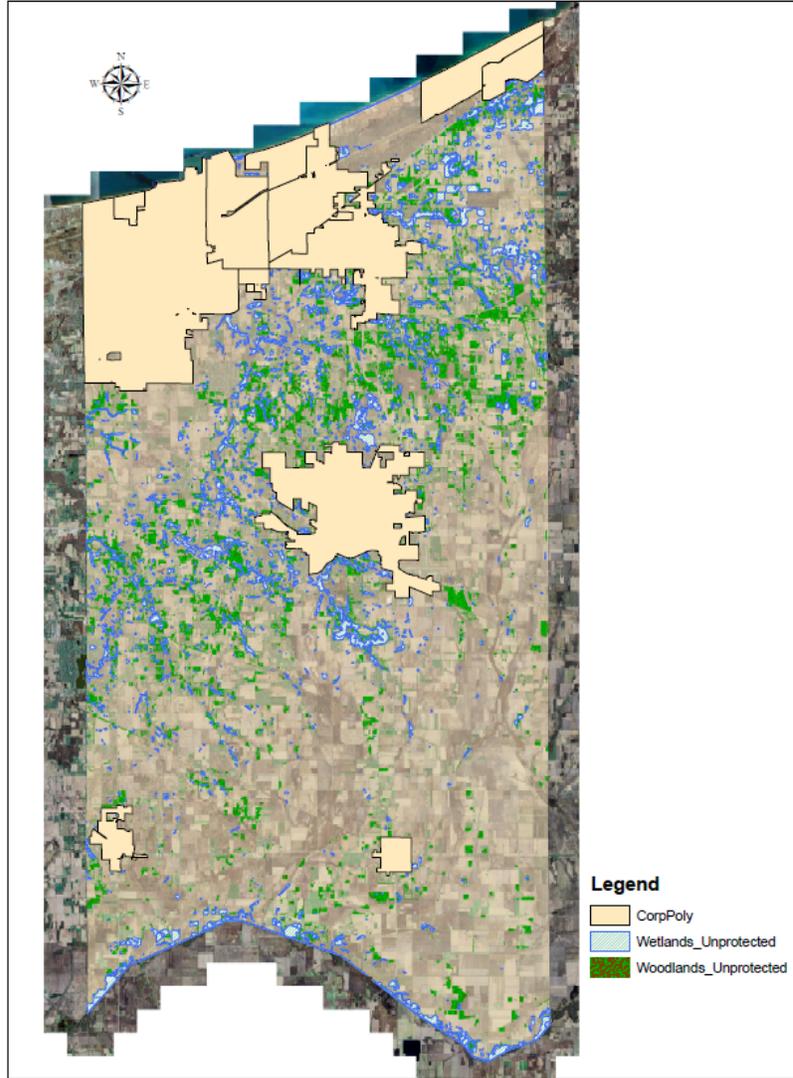


Porter County GIS Office
gis@portercog.org
Ph: (317) 737-4274

November 15, 2011

Porter County Parks Department

Unprotected Wetlands & Woodlands



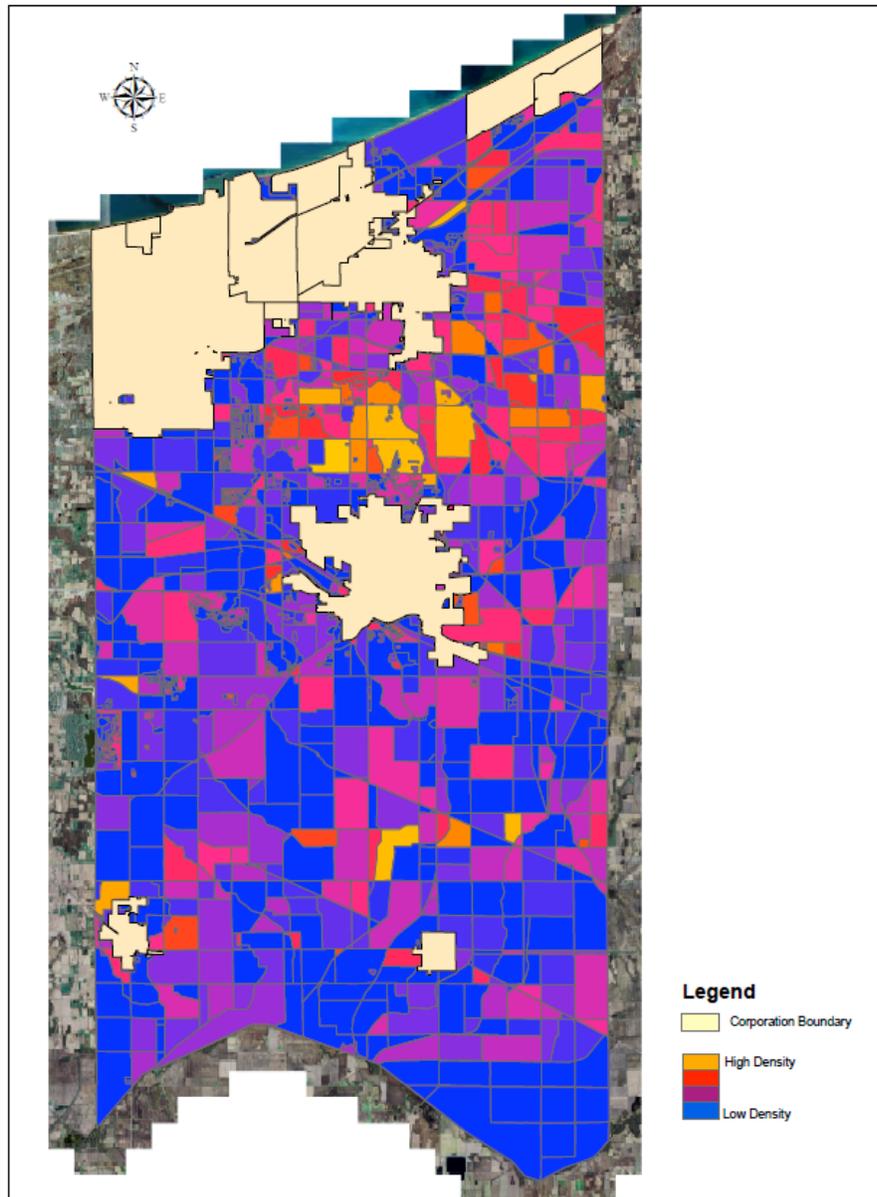
- Legend**
- CorpPoly
 - Wetlands_Unprotected
 - Woodlands_Unprotected

0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet



Porter County GIS Office
gis@portco.org | November 15, 2011
Ph: (219) 707-8274

Porter County Parks Department
Area Density For Individuals 55 & Over



- Legend**
- Corporation Boundary
 - High Density
 - Low Density

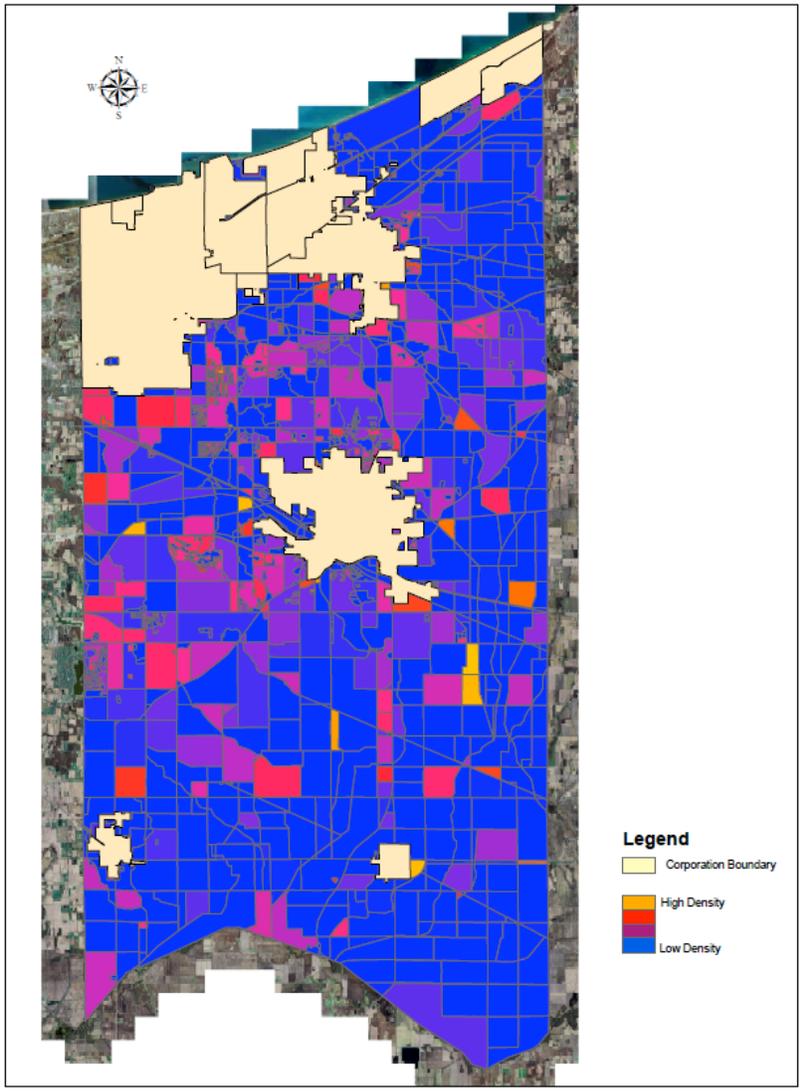
0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet



Porter County GIS Office
gis@portco.org | November 15, 2011
Ph: (219) 707-8274

Porter County Parks Department

Area Density For Non-White Population



- Legend**
- Corporation Boundary
 - High Density
 - Low Density

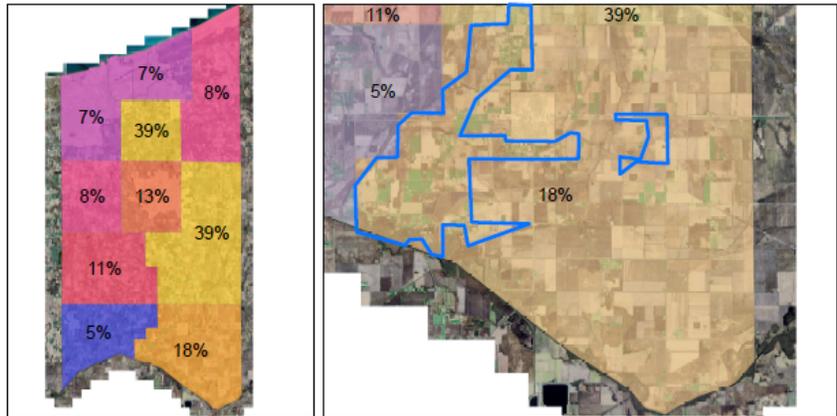
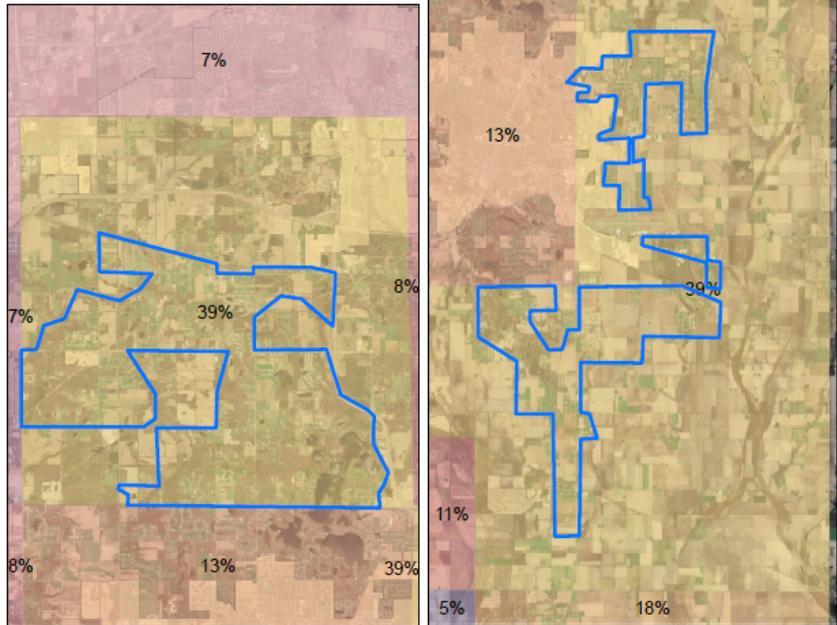
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Porter County GIS Office
gis@portercoco.org | November 15, 2011
Ph: (219) 707-8274

Porter County Parks Department

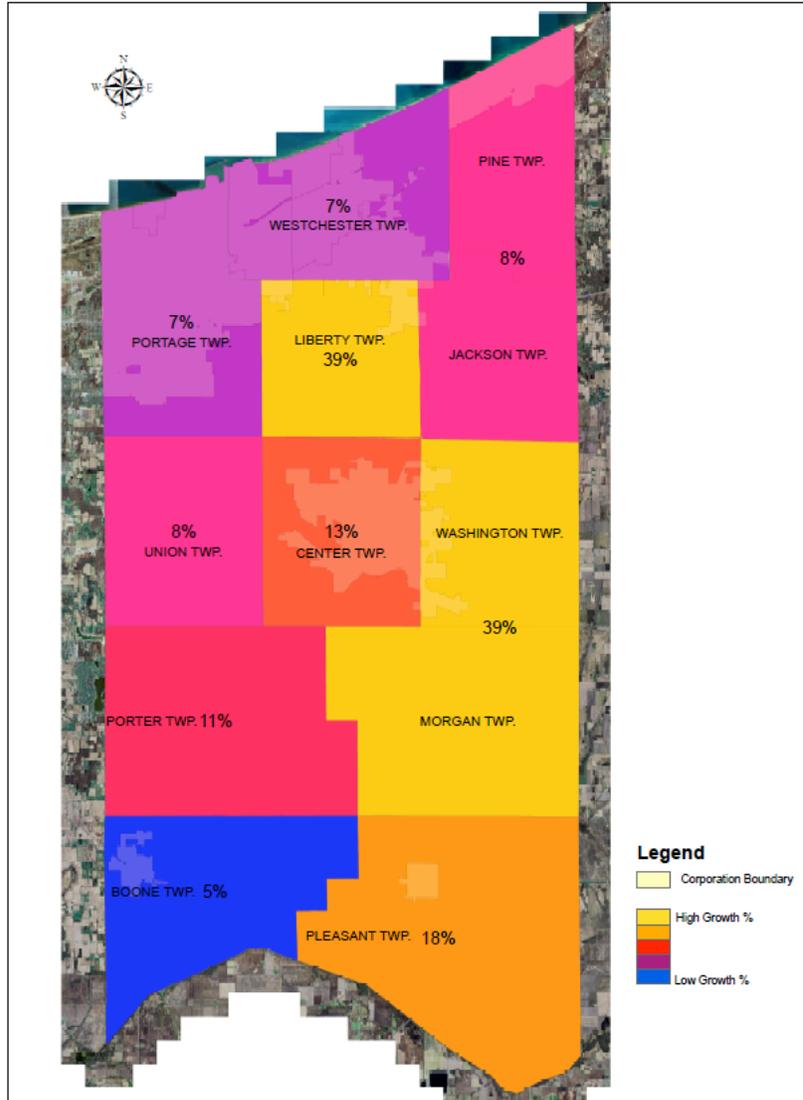
Population Density By High Growth Areas



0 3,750 7,500 15,000 Feet

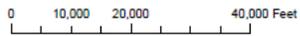
Porter County Parks Department

Population Growth Percent By Township



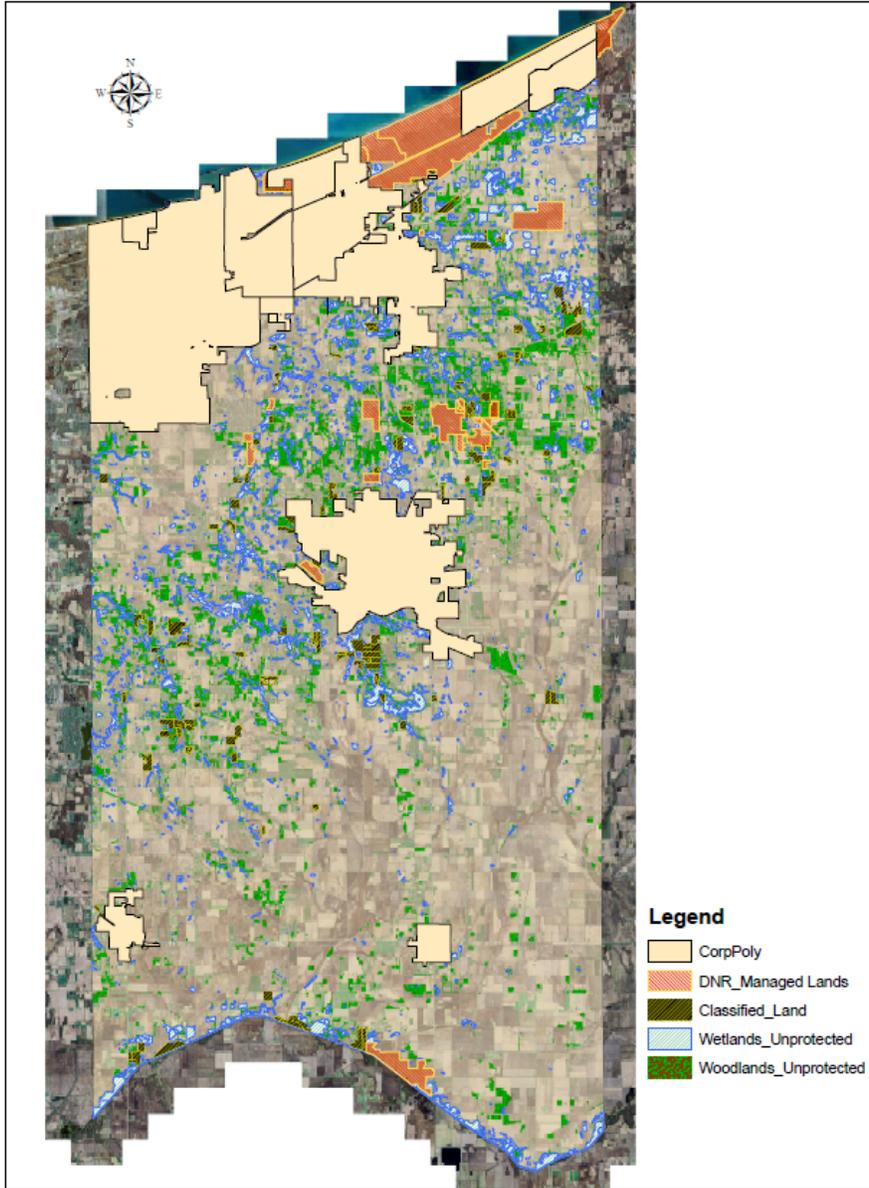
Legend

- Corporation Boundary
- High Growth %
- Low Growth %



Porter County Parks Department

Unprotected Wetlands & Woodlands



Legend

- CorpPoly
- DNR_Managed Lands
- Classified_Land
- Wetlands_Unprotected
- Woodlands_Unprotected

0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet

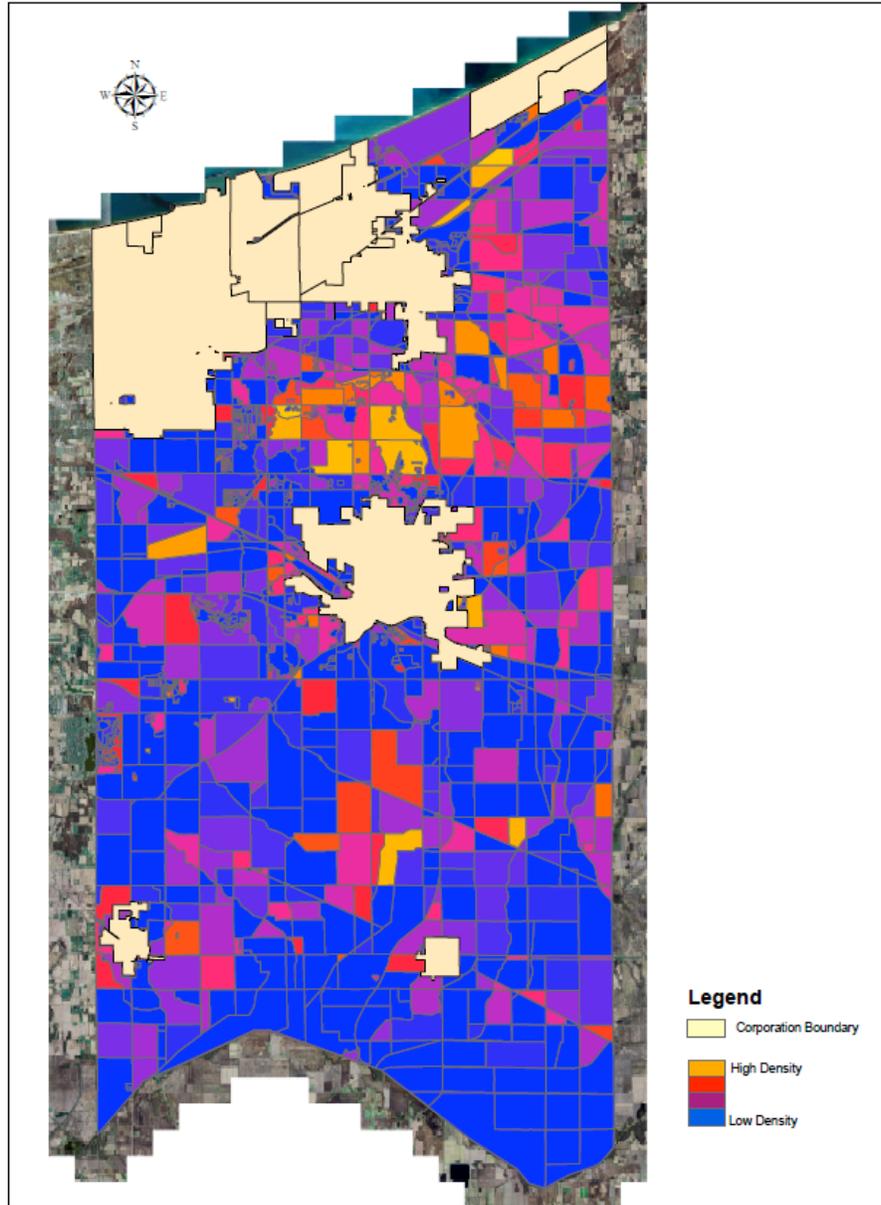


Porter County GIS Office
gis@portercounty.org
Ph: (219) 705-8274

November 15, 2011

Porter County Parks Department

Area Density For Children Under 18



0 10,000 20,000 40,000 Feet



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soertrand@portercoco.org | November 15, 2011
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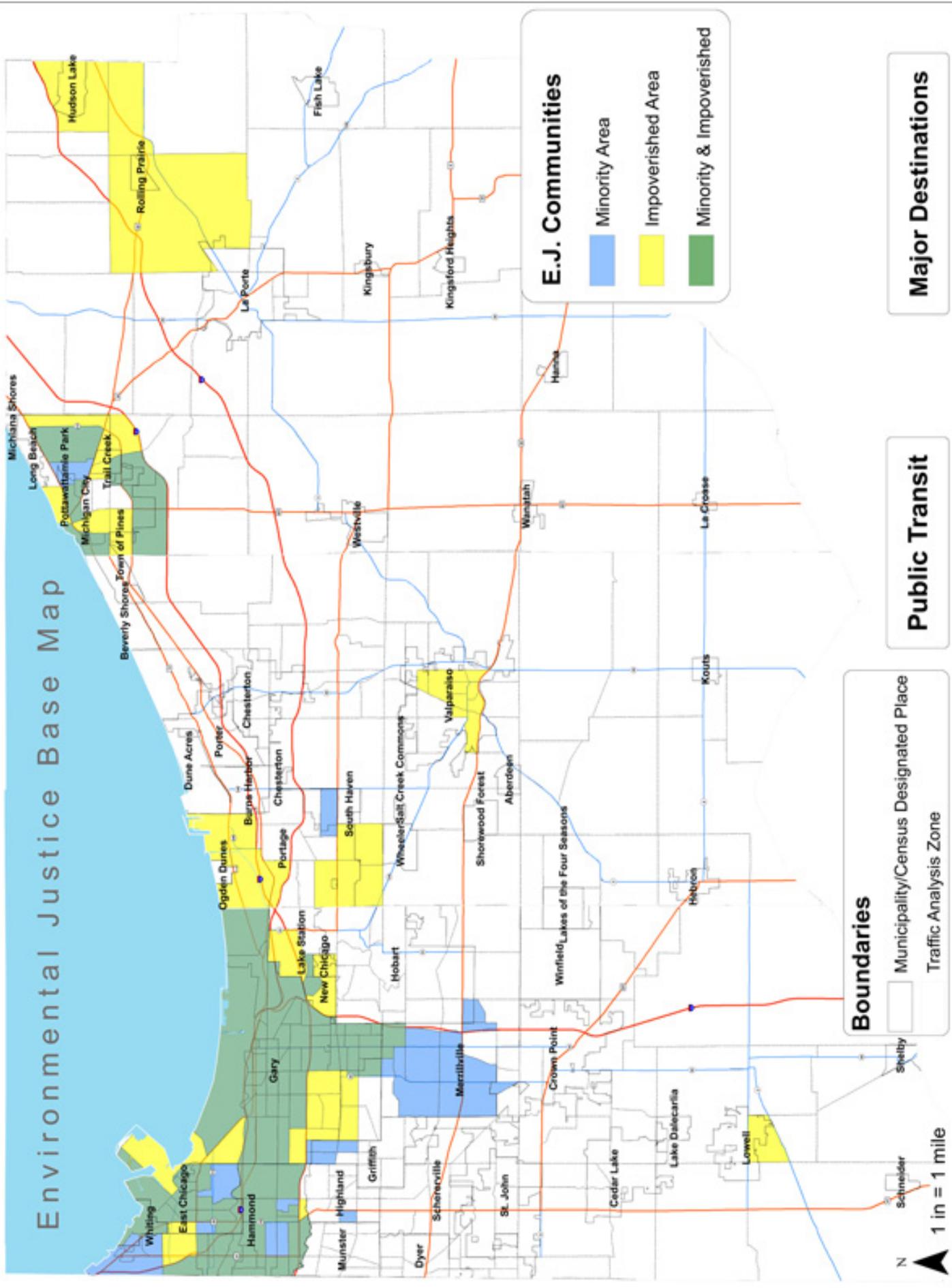
GREENWAY OPPORTUNITIES FOR NORTHWEST INDIANA



- EXISTING OPEN SPACE-PUBLIC SERVICE
- EXISTING OPEN SPACE-PRIVATE MANAGEMENT
- POTENTIAL MANAGED OPEN SPACE

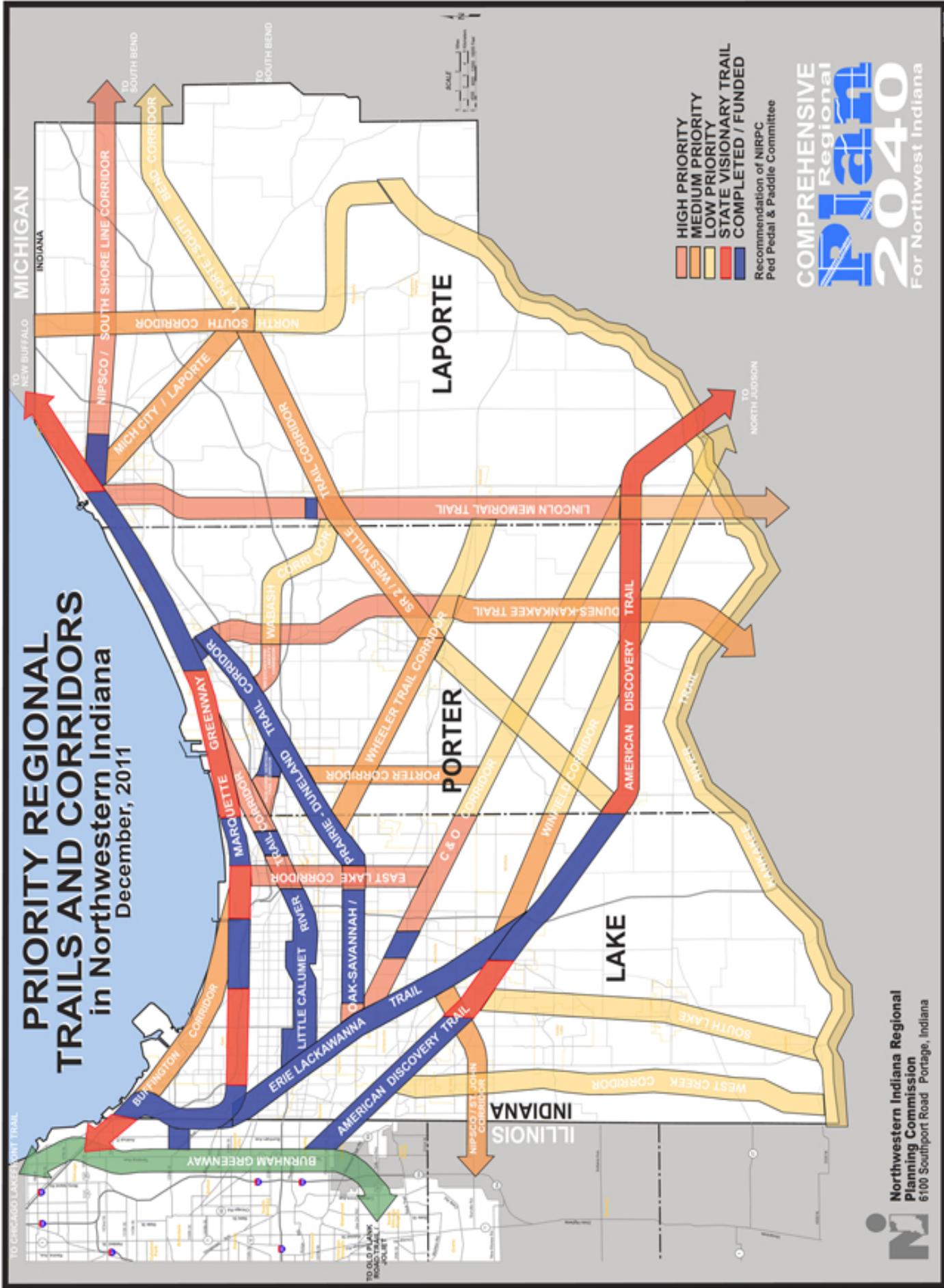
Data Sources: Environmental System Research, Inc.; Geographic Data Technology, Inc. US Geological Survey; US Census; Indiana Department of Natural Resources; various local paper sources digitized by Openlands. This map is to be used for general planning purposes only. The information displayed on this map comes from a variety of sources and varies in age and spatial accuracy. [figreenway_2_logomap_proposedgreenways_041007.mxd](#)

Environmental Justice Base Map



PRIORITY REGIONAL TRAILS AND CORRIDORS in Northwestern Indiana

December, 2011



Northwestern Indiana Regional
Planning Commission
6100 Southport Road - Portage, Indiana