

Chapter IV

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY RESULTS

INTRODUCTION

Two public opinion surveys of County residents were conducted under this planning program in 2002 to gather information related to public perceptions of outdoor recreation, the County park system, and protection of natural resources. A summary of the survey findings is presented in this chapter.

The surveys were conducted on behalf of the County by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Research. The surveys were designed with the assistance of the Washington County Park and Open Space Plan Technical Advisory Committee. The surveys were viewed by that Committee as an important means of broadening citizen participation in the preparation of the new County park and open space plan.

Similar surveys were conducted in conjunction with the previous County park and open space plan in 1996.¹ The 2002 surveys included most of the questions asked in the 1996 surveys and certain additional questions. This chapter points out similarities and differences between the results of the 1996 and 2002 surveys.

TELEPHONE SURVEY FINDINGS

The telephone survey, conducted during July 2002, interviewed 605 randomly selected County residents. The survey was intended to help determine the following: how familiar County residents are with the County park system and how often such residents use the parks; how safe County residents feel in the Washington County park system; how County residents are benefiting from use of the parks; the type of recreational activities in which County residents were interested in pursuing; and the public support for funding the acquisition of new parks and environmentally sensitive lands and for the development of additional park facilities. The questions asked and the findings of the telephone survey are documented in a report entitled *Resident Views on Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces In Washington County, 2002*, published by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.² A copy of the survey instrument is included in Appendix B-1. The major findings of the telephone survey are described below.

¹Resident Views on Parks, Recreation, and Open Spaces in Washington County, *January 1996, and Views and Assessments of Individuals Who Reserved Sites in Washington County Parks, 1994-95, February 1996.*

²Copies of the report are available from the Washington County Planning and Parks Department.

Use of County Parks

Visits to County Parks

The telephone survey found that 66 percent of those surveyed had visited a County park at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey. The three County parks visited most often were Ridge Run, Sandy Knoll, and Glacier Hills Park. About 23 percent of survey respondents had visited one County park in the previous year, another 20 percent had visited two parks, and 23 percent had visited three or more parks. In 1996 the same percentage of survey respondents had visited a County park at least once in the 12 months preceding the survey, and the same three parks had been visited most often.

The survey also found that households with children were more likely than those without children to have used a County park within the past year, with 79 percent of households with children using a County park at least once compared to 56 percent of households without children. Households with children were also more likely to have used a County park in the 1996 survey. Households located in cities and villages were just as likely as households in unincorporated areas to use County parks, with 66 percent of households reporting a visit to a County park in both areas. In the 1996 survey, the percentage of households likely to use County parks was slightly higher for households located in cities and villages than households in unincorporated areas.

Safety at County Parks

Survey respondents were asked whether they felt safe at Washington County Parks. The majority, 97 percent, indicated that they felt safe. Only seven respondents (3 percent) reported not feeling safe, and listed the following locations: Ridge Run and Sandy Knoll County parks; Woodlawn Union Park, owned by the City of Hartford; and places in general after dark. This question was not included in the 1996 survey.

Benefits from County Parks

In another question not included in the 1996 survey, survey respondents were asked if they benefited from using Washington County Parks and how. The most frequently cited benefit (79 percent) was that parks helped obtain a greater appreciation of nature. Other benefits cited included: parks helped decrease stress level (77 percent); parks helped provide balance between work and play (77 percent); parks improved the quality of life (76 percent); and parks helped improve overall physical health (55 percent).

Quality of County Parks

Also a new question since the 1996 survey, respondents were asked to rate the quality of Washington County Parks on a scale from one to 10, with 10 being excellent. The average response was eight.

Interest and Participation in Various Recreational Activities

One of the purposes of the telephone survey was to identify the level of interest and participation of County residents in a variety of specified recreational activities, in order to help determine the types of recreational facilities that should be considered when designing the new park and open space plan. The survey listed resource-related activities that are commonly provided at County and State parks, including hiking and other trail-related activities, picnicking, beach swimming, camping, fishing, and boating; as well as more intensive recreational activities such as tennis, soccer, and softball that are more commonly accommodated at city, village, and town parks.

Types of Recreational Activities

Survey respondents were first asked if they or anyone in their household had an interest in a certain activity, and if so, if anyone in the household had participated in the activity in the preceding year. The responses are summarized on Table 16. As shown by the table, the activities with the highest percentage of respondents that reported a household member participating were in hiking and walking (70 percent), on-road biking (60 percent), and swimming in pools (51 percent). These activities were also frequently mentioned in the 1996 survey. Survey respondents or a member of their household participated less often in organized sports than in individual or family recreational activities. Less than 20 percent of the respondents reported a household member participating in organized sports such as baseball, basketball, football, soccer, softball, tennis, and volleyball. In 1996, respondents also participated in individual or family recreational activities more often than in organized sports.

Table 16

RECREATIONAL INTERESTS AND PARTICIPATION LEVELS BY WASHINGTON COUNTY HOUSEHOLDS

Recreational Activity	Percent of Households Where One or More Members Have Interest in the Activity	Percent of Households that Have Interest in Activity and Actually Participated in Activity in the Past Year
Hiking/Walking.....	76	70
On-Road Biking	69	60
Swimming in Pools	62	51
Beach Swimming	60	45
Fishing	58	46
Picnicking	56	45
Camping	54	NA
Tobogganing or Sledding.....	50	38
Nature Education Program.....	48	19
Off-road Trail Biking	48	31
Water Slides/Water Parks.....	46	32
Children's Playgrounds.....	46	42
Driving through Parks	45	37
Mountain Biking.....	41	27
Golfing	36	29
Ice Skating	34	18
Canoeing	30	16
Recreational Boating.....	29	23
Rollerblading/Skateboarding	27	21
Dog Training/Exercise off Leash	24	14
Baseball	23	14
Volleyball.....	22	14
Cross-Country Skiing/Ungroomed Trails	22	11
Jogging	22	19
Football.....	21	10
Cross-Country Skiing/Groomed Trails	21	10
Snowmobiling	21	14
Softball.....	21	14
Basketball.....	20	17
Archery	20	12
Tennis.....	20	14
Soccer.....	15	11
Disc Golf	11	5
Roller Hockey	4	1

Source: UWM Urban Research Center.

There were several activities that showed a significant difference between the percentage of respondents or a household member interested in the activity and the percentage participating in the activity. The recreational activity with the most significant difference was nature education programs, with 48 percent having interest and only 19 percent actually participating. Other activities with a significant difference include: beach swimming, canoeing, ice skating, mountain biking, off-road trail biking, and water slide/water parks. These differences may reflect a demand for recreational activities that are not currently offered at Washington County Parks.

Location of Recreational Activities

Survey respondents who had participated in one of the specified recreational activities were asked where they had performed the activity. As may be expected, the responses were numerous and varied, and many respondents had participated in a specific recreational activity in more than one location over the course of the previous year.

Responses were broadly organized into three categories, on the basis of the sites utilized, as follows: publicly owned sites and private yards and neighborhoods within Washington County; publicly owned sites outside of the County; and other privately owned sites. The first category was further subdivided to differentiate between publicly owned sites owned by State, County, and local levels of government, and school districts; nearby streets or neighborhoods areas; and private homes or yards. The second category was further subdivided to differentiate between State or National Parks, sites owned by local levels of government, and other parks/lakes. The third category was further subdivided to differentiate between private facilities, retail facilities, and generic facilities.

For activities presently offered at Washington County parks—such as ice skating, cross country skiing on ungroomed trails, beach swimming, canoeing, fishing, jogging, hiking and walking, playgrounds, picnicking, recreational boating, and pleasure driving—County parks were mentioned most often as the location for these activities. Organized sports offered at Washington County parks, such as volleyball, basketball, and soccer also were most commonly pursued in County parks. Softball most commonly took place in sites owned by local units of government. A private facility was the most frequently mentioned place for golfing.

Activities such as disc golf, mountain biking, off-road trail biking, football, dog training or exercising, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and nature education programs, took place most often at Washington County Parks even though these activities or trails for these activities are not formally provided for at County parks. Private yards and nearby streets and neighborhood areas in the County were most commonly used for roller hockey. Nearby streets and neighborhood areas in the County were used most often for on-road biking. Archery took place most often in private yards in Washington County. The activities most likely to have occurred at sites owned by local units of government within the County were swimming in pools and tennis. Camping commonly took place at a private facility. The activities most likely to have occurred outside the County at sites owned by local units of government were visiting water slides or parks, and baseball.

Proximity and Participation in Recreational Activities

Survey respondents were asked if anyone in their household would have participated or participated more often in specified recreational activities if sites or facilities for such activities had been available closer to home. Fifty-seven percent of respondents replied affirmatively, with pools/swimming being the activity identified by the highest number (21 percent) of respondents. Water slides/water parks and biking were identified by more than 10 percent of respondents; and off leash dog training/exercise, hiking/walking, archery, rollerblading/roller hockey, and camping were identified by between 5 and 8 percent of respondents. The activities identified are listed in Table 17. In 1996, the most often cited were swimming in pools and hiking/walking. Also in the 1996 survey, water slides/water parks were much less popular and off leash dog training/exercise and archery were not mentioned.

Increased Use of County Parks

Respondents were asked if there was anything that would make it more likely that they or members of their household would use Washington County parks more often. Twenty-nine percent of respondents replied affirmatively, with the highest percentage of respondents citing a better understanding of what is available. Other factors that might cause them to visit County parks more frequently included: closer location, more free time, the addition of facilities, allowing dogs, and provision of opportunities for swimming.

Views on Acquisition, Protection, and Development of Parkland and Natural Resource Areas

Survey respondents were asked a series of questions related to their views on acquiring and developing additional lands for parks, developing a County trail system, developing additional County facilities, acquiring land for resource protection purposes, and providing access to lakes and waterways. Respondents were also asked for their opinions regarding various means of raising funds for acquisition and development of park and open space lands. These questions directly relate to the emphasis placed in previous regional and county park and open space plans on preserving land with important natural resources, particularly lands within the primary environmental corridors, and in providing a regional recreational trail system along major streams and the Kettle Moraine.

Conservation, Natural Resources, Connecting County Parks, and Providing Lake Access

The first question asked respondents the extent to which they agreed with the statement: “Conserving land for public parks, recreation, water quality, and wildlife habitat is a good use of public funds.” A high level of support was expressed, with 93 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with that statement, 3 percent disagreeing, and 4 percent expressing no opinion.

The next statement read: “The County should provide a system of recreation trails to connect County parks and other public recreational lands and trails.” Here, 68 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 21 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 11 percent had no opinion.

Somewhat less agreement was given to the next statement: “County government is doing enough to preserve natural resources and open space in your community.” Here, 58 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 26 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 16 percent had no opinion. Results of the previous three statements were very similar to the 1996 survey.

The last statement in this series, which is new to the 2002 survey, read: “County government is doing enough to provide access to lakes and waterways.” Here, 53 percent agreed or strongly agreed, 28 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed, and 19 percent had no opinion.

Future County Initiatives

The next set of questions asked respondents their views regarding potential County actions to protect the environment and to expand and improve the park system. Strong support was expressed for County acquisition of environmentally sensitive lands, with 85 percent of respondents expressing support for such acquisition, 14 percent expressing opposition, and 1 percent expressing no opinion. Fifty-eight percent of respondents expressed support for County acquisition of lands for new County parks, while 42 percent expressed opposition. Much less support was expressed for improving or expanding facilities at existing County parks, with only 39 percent of respondents expressing support and 61 percent expressed opposition. Similar to the 2002 survey, the 1996 survey showed strong support for the purchase of environmentally sensitive lands. The 1996 survey showed slightly less support for County acquisition of land for new County parks, and slightly more for improving or expanding facilities at County parks.

Two questions not included in the 1996 survey asked if Washington County should provide a nature center for educational programming, and if Washington County should own and operate additional golf courses. Strong support was expressed for Washington County to provide a nature center, with 70 percent of respondents expressing support, 28 percent expressing opposition, and 2 percent expressing no opinion. There was significantly less support expressed for Washington County to own and operate additional golf courses, with only 24 percent of respondents expressing support, 72 percent expressing opposition, and 4 percent expressing no opinion.

Financial Mechanisms

Respondents who responded affirmatively that the County should take action to acquire lands for resource protection purposes and to expand the park system were asked how the County should finance the action. Respondents were asked to chose from the following: increased taxes, borrowing money through bonds to be repaid over time, fees charged to users, a combination of these three alternatives, and some other way.

Table 17

ACTIVITIES IN WHICH RESIDENTS WOULD PARTICIPATE MORE OFTEN IF AVAILABLE CLOSER TO HOME

Recreational Activity	Percent of Responses
Swimming in Pools.....	21
Water Slides/Water Parks	17
Biking.....	12
Dog training/Exercise off Leash.....	8
Hiking/Walking	7
Archery.....	7
Rollerblading/Roller Hockey	6
Camping.....	5

Source: UWM Urban Research Center.

Over half of the respondents favored a combination of taxes, bonds, and user fees to finance the acquisition of woodlands and wetlands, to improve or expand facilities in existing County parks, and to acquire lands to create new County parks. The least preferred financing mechanism for all options was increased taxes, being favored by only small percentages of respondents. In the 1996 survey, user fees were cited as the overall preferred financial mechanism.

Activities for Expanded Facilities

Respondents who responded affirmatively that the County should take action to acquire lands for resource protection purposes and to expand the park system were also asked what activities these expanded facilities should be used for. The top activities cited—those with at least a 20 percent response—were hiking/walking, children’s playgrounds, beach swimming, fishing, and picnicking.

Respondents were then specifically asked which activities Washington County should provide for, that are not already offered in the County. The activities cited most often were swimming in pools, and water slides/water parks.

MAIL SURVEY FINDINGS

The mail survey was intended primarily to determine user satisfaction with park facilities and to help determine additional facilities park users would like to have provided at County parks. The findings of the mail survey are documented in a report entitled *Views and Assessments of Individuals who Reserved Sites in Washington County Parks, 2000-2001, 2002*, published by the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee.³

The survey was mailed during August 2002 to 573 County residents who had reserved a facility at a County park between 2000 and 2001. A total of 161 surveys, or 28 percent of those mailed, were returned and included in the analysis. A copy of the survey instrument is provided in Appendix B-2. A summary of the results is provided below, with comparisons made, as appropriate, to the results of a similar survey conducted in 1996.

Use of County Park Facilities

Respondents reported that they had reserved park facilities at Ackerman’s Grove, Glacier Hills, Homestead Hollow, Ridge Run, and Sandy Knoll parks. Facilities at Sandy Knoll Park were reserved slightly more often—by 27 percent of respondents—than Glacier Hills, Homestead Hollow, and Ridge Run parks, which were reserved by 23 percent, 25 percent, and 23 percent of respondents, respectively. Ackerman’s Grove was reserved by 2 percent of respondents.⁴ These percentages somewhat differed from the 1996 survey in that proportionally fewer reservations were reported at Sandy Knoll Park, and proportionally more reservations were reported at Homestead Hollow Park. Ackerman’s Grove was not developed in 1996.

With respect to the type of facilities reserved, the highest percentage of respondents, 63 percent, had reserved a closed shelter, 32 percent had reserved an open shelter, 3 percent had reserved the chapel at Glacier Hills Park, and 2 percent had reserved an area for school groups. Comparisons to the 1996 survey are precluded by differences in the survey forms.

Respondents were asked the age of persons participating in the function for which the site was reserved. Adults aged 18 to 64 were present at nearly all functions (93 percent). Children 13 years or younger were present at 73 percent of all functions, while high-school-aged individuals were present at 57 percent of all functions. Those 65 years of age and over were present at almost half of park functions. These responses were similar to those of the 1996 survey.

³*Copies of the report are available from the Washington County Planning and Parks Department.*

⁴*The shelter at Ackerman’s Grove did not open until June 2001.*

Mail survey respondents were asked to describe their purpose for reserving a site. Forty-six percent of respondents had reserved a park site for a group picnic, which included family, company, church, and scout or youth picnics. Another 25 percent of respondents reported reserving a site for a party, and about 29 percent of respondents reserved the site for functions other than a picnic or party, including weddings, school reunions, organized sporting events, graduations, special events, club events, and showers. These responses were similar to those of the 1996 survey.

Most Important Features at Washington County Parks

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, how important the features were at the facility they reserved, with 10 being very important. A list of the features was given in the survey, with an option to list additional features. The rating of importance for each feature is shown in Table 18. Respondents identified the most important feature to be the availability of electricity, with an average rating of 9.3. Other important features, with a rating above eight, were proximity to bathroom, size of shelter, and proximity to parking. The least important feature was the availability of heat, which received a rating of 3.1. Some of the other features cited as important but not included on the list, were cooking facilities, quality of bathrooms, picnic tables, and privacy. This question was not included in the 1996 survey.

Reserving Areas in the Parks

Respondents were asked if they would have reserved an outdoor area adjacent to a shelter building if this were an option (in a question not included in the 1996 survey). About 72 percent indicated they would not reserve an outdoor area if this were an option. About 28 percent indicated that they would reserve an outdoor area if available, and listed the following areas: volleyball court, athletic field, basketball court, playground area, horseshoe pits, and the area around the barn.

Assessment of the Reserved Facility

Respondents were asked to rate, on a scale of 1 to 10, the ease of access, cleanliness, and overall opinion of the facility they reserved. The ease of access was rated 8.8 on average, cleanliness was rated 8.5, and the overall opinion of the facility was 8.7. This question was not included in the 1996 survey.

Amenities Used in the Parks

In another question not included in the 1996 survey, respondents were asked which amenities they used when reserving a site at a Washington County park (see Table 19). More than 80 percent of the respondents used picnic areas and 73 percent used playground equipment. The amenities used least at County parks were ice skating, boat launches, and snowmobile trails.

Assessment of Park Features

Features Liked Best

Survey respondents were asked in an open-ended question to identify features that they liked best at the reserved site. Respondents were allowed to give multiple answers, identifying over 247 features they liked best. The features identified by respondents were organized into five broad categories, including park amenities, recreation, park characteristics, park administration, and shelter amenities. As shown in Table 20, 42 percent of the respondents identified park amenities—such as restroom facilities, provision of shelters, picnic tables, and barbecue grills and fire pits—as features they liked best. Recreation features such as recreational facilities and hiking trails were identified by 24 percent of the respondents as features they liked best. Twenty percent of respondents liked park characteristics, such as the park's natural setting, privacy, spaciousness, and location. The percentage of respondents that liked recreation facilities has increased since the 1996 survey and the percentage of respondents that liked park characteristics has decreased since the 1996 survey.

Features Liked Least

Survey respondents were also asked to identify what they liked least about the reserved site. Respondents were allowed to give multiple answers, identifying 95 features they liked least. There were less negative features identified than positive features, similar to the 1996 survey. The features identified were divided into seven broad categories, including restroom facilities, shelter amenities, park administration, park amenities, park

Table 18

**MOST IMPORTANT FEATURES AT
WASHINGTON COUNTY PARK SITES**

Feature	Average Rating on a Scale from 1 to 10
Availability of Electricity.....	9.3
Proximity to Bathroom.....	8.9
Size of Shelter	8.7
Proximity to Parking.....	8.5
Proximity to Water	7.9
Proximity to Garbage Dumpsters.....	7.4
Proximity to Playground.....	6.5
Views of Park.....	6.0
Proximity to Athletic Fields.....	5.1
Availability of Fire Pit	4.3
Proximity to Hiking Trails	4.0
Proximity to Phone.....	3.9
Availability of Heat.....	3.1

Source: UWM Urban Research Center.

Table 19

**RESPONDENTS USE OF PARK AMENITIES
AT WASHINGTON COUNTY PARK SITES**

Amenity	Percent of Respondents
Picnic Area	82
Playground Equipment.....	73
Playfields.....	48
Hiking Trails.....	46
Volleyball Court	31
Fishing.....	21
Basketball Court.....	18
Horseshoe Area	16
Swimming Beach.....	15
Sledding	7
Cross-country Ski Trails.....	4
Boat Launch	3
Ice Skating	3
Snowmobile Trails.....	2

Source: UWM Urban Research Center.

characteristics, inadequate recreation facilities, and safety. As shown in Table 21, the category most frequently cited was restroom facilities, with 32 percent of respondents dissatisfied with restroom facilities. Inadequacies with respect to shelter amenities such as cooking facilities, building conditions, and electrical service were identified by 18 percent of the respondents as features they liked least. Seventeen percent noted a problem with park administration, particularly maintenance. The 1996 survey also identified restroom facilities as the least liked facility, but respondents appear to be more satisfied in the 2002 survey.

Suggestions for Improving County Parks

Improving Existing Park Facilities

Survey respondents were asked for their suggestions for improving existing park facilities. Thirty-four percent of the suggestions for improving parks were related to park amenities, particularly providing additional dumpsters and recycling containers. Improving park administration was suggested by 20 percent, and improving shelter amenities was suggested by 18 percent. Improving restroom facilities and recreation facilities was suggested less often. Only 13 percent of respondents suggested improving restroom facilities, compared with 30 percent in 1996; this may be attributed, at least in part, to the development of new restrooms at Homestead Hollow Park, Ridge Run Park, and Sandy Knoll Park.

New Amenities/Facilities at Parks

Survey respondents were also asked for suggestions related to new or expanded park facilities. Forty percent suggested recreation facilities such as dog parks, playground equipment, and volleyball courts. Suggestions for new park amenities, such as additional benches/tables, and additional dumpsters/recycling containers, were listed by 35 percent of respondents. Twenty-two percent suggested additional shelter amenities, such as improving the electrical service. Again less respondents suggested new restroom facilities in the 2002 survey (5 percent) compared to respondents in the 1996 survey (16 percent).

Assessment of Park Reservation System and Cost

The mail survey also asked respondents what type of reservation system they would prefer. Respondents were allowed to give multiple responses. A telephone reservation system was preferred by the majority, as indicated by 51 percent of respondents. An internet based reservation system and an in-person system (the current method) was preferred by 32 percent, and a mail-in reservation system was preferred by 19 percent. In the 1996 survey, the majority of the respondents were satisfied with the current in-person system.

Table 20

WASHINGTON COUNTY PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES LIKED BEST

Features and Facilities	Number	Percent
Park Amenities		
Bathroom Facilities	23	9
Potable Water.....	2	1
Shelter	43	17
Parking	6	3
Picnic Tables	18	7
Grills and Fire Pits	13	5
Subtotal	105	42
Park Characteristics		
Privacy	8	3
Park Setting.....	16	6
Spaciousness.....	9	4
Convenient Location of Park	17	7
Subtotal	50	20
Recreation		
Trails and Hiking	16	6
Recreation Facilities.....	44	18
Subtotal	60	24
Park Administration		
Maintenance and Cleanliness.....	13	5
Park Policy	2	1
Park Staff.....	1	1
Subtotal	16	7
Shelter Amenities		
Electricity	9	4
Cooking Facilities	7	3
Subtotal	16	7
Total	247	100

Source: UWM Urban Research Center.

In the 2002 survey, almost all (94 percent) responded that county staff had been helpful and courteous to them when making reservations. A similar response was given in the 1996 survey, with 96 percent indicating staff had been helpful and courteous when they made a reservation.

Survey respondents were asked to assess the cost of reserving a park site. Most of the respondents (82 percent) replied that the cost was about right, 18 percent said it was too high, and none of the respondents said it was too low. These responses were very similar to the 1996 survey responses.

Respondents were asked to list additional comments about the park reservation. Thirty-nine percent of respondents complained about the park reservations and price, commenting that the in-person system was inconvenient and cumbersome and that there should be more reservation systems and options. The same number (39 percent) of respondents were satisfied with the park reservation and experience, specifically giving comments about the beautiful park settings and that they would recommend reserving a park site to others.

Assessment of County Staff at Park

Respondents were asked if County staff at the park site was helpful and courteous. Over half (55 percent) of the respondents had no contact with park staff, just less than half (43 percent) indicated that staff was helpful and courteous, and 3 percent indicated that staff was not.

Table 21

WASHINGTON COUNTY PARK FEATURES AND FACILITIES LIKED LEAST

Features and Facilities	Number	Percent
Restroom Facilities		
General Complaint.....	9	10
No Water to Wash With	5	5
Odor, Smell, Cleanliness.....	4	4
Pit Toilets.....	9	10
Distance to Restrooms.....	3	3
Subtotal	30	32
Park Administration		
Maintenance	11	11
Park Policy	3	3
Park Staff.....	2	2
Subtotal	16	16
Park Amenities		
Lack of Potable Water	5	5
Parking	3	3
Lack of Tables-Old	1	1
Subtotal	9	9
Park Characteristics		
Lack of Privacy	1	1
Park Setting.....	3	3
Poor Access to Reserved Site	6	7
Subtotal	10	11
Shelter Amenities		
Condition of Buildings.....	5	5
Inadequate Electrical Service.....	3	3
Inadequate Cooking Facilities.....	6	7
Inadequate Cooling System	2	2
Poor Lighting	1	1
Subtotal	17	18
Inadequate Recreation Facilities	8	9
Subtotal	8	9
Safety	5	5
Subtotal	5	5
Total	95	100

Source: UWM Urban Research Center.

PUBLIC INFORMATIONAL/INPUT MEETINGS

As another means of broadening citizen participation in the preparation of the new County park and open space plan, the Washington County Planning and Parks Department held public informational meetings throughout the planning process. The first in a series of meetings were held at: the Kewaskum Municipal Building Annex on October 22, 2002; the Washington County Public Agency Center in the City of West Bend on October 23, 2002; and at Glacier Hills County Park in the Town of Richfield on October 24, 2002. The purpose of the meetings were to review results of the telephone and mail surveys presented in this chapter, and to solicit public input on the completed portion of the new Washington County park and open space plan. Twelve people attended the public informational meeting on October 22, 26 people attended on October 23, and 14 people attended on October 24. A summary of comments from all public informational meetings are included in Appendix C.

Comments received at the public informational meetings were generally consistent with the results of the surveys. Those comments related to open space preservation, development of park and open space sites, and plan implementation responsibilities. Specifically, those in attendance spoke positively on topics including: the preservation of farmland; protection of natural areas; the acquisition of land just for protection purposes; the development of trails for bicycles, pedestrians, horseback riding, and rollerblading; the provision of ice skating on ponds; the development of a nature center; league baseball diamonds; a swimming beach on Big Cedar Lake; the provision of a dog park; more parks equally distributed throughout the County; and the consideration of using abandoned gravel pit sites for future parks.

YOUTH SURVEYS

In 2002, the University of Wisconsin Extension—Washington County conducted surveys of Washington County youth in the Villages of Germantown and Jackson to gather information about use and perceptions of Washington County parks. Ages of those surveyed ranged from 12 to 18. Of the 20 surveys completed, 13 responded that they had visited one or more of the following Washington County parks in the last year: Ackerman’s Grove, Family Park/Washington County Golf Course, Glacier Hills, Heritage Trails, Homestead Hollow, Lizard Mound, and Ridge Run. Hiking trails were mentioned most often as an amenity used by Washington County youth. Other amenities mentioned often included picnic areas, playfields, sledding, and sand volleyball. Suggestions for improvement or new features at Washington County parks included: the improvement of trails, playgrounds, and sled hills, and the provision of pools, ice skating facilities, soccer fields, and swimming beaches.

SUMMARY

This chapter has presented the findings of the public opinion surveys regarding the Washington County park system conducted by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Urban Initiatives and Research. The telephone survey, conducted during July 2002, interviewed 605 randomly selected County residents. The telephone survey was intended to help determine the County residents’ use of County parks, recreational interests, and opinions on acquiring and expanding lands for parks. The mail survey, sent in August 2002 to County residents who had reserved a facility at a County park between 2000 and 2001, was received from 161 residents. The mail survey was intended to help determine user satisfaction with park facilities and determine additional facilities park users would like to have provided at County parks. The major findings of the telephone and mail survey are described below.

Telephone Survey

1. The telephone survey indicated that 66 percent of respondents or members of their household had visited a County park during the preceding year. Ridge Run, Sandy Knoll, and Glacial Hills were the parks visited most by County residents. Households with children reported using the County parks more than those without children. Park use was the same for households residing in an incorporated or unincorporated municipality.
2. In a series of questions about the use of Washington County parks, results included: 97 percent of respondents indicated they felt safe at Washington County Parks; the most common reason respondents benefited from using Washington County Parks was that parks helped obtain a greater

appreciation of nature; and respondents rated the quality of Washington County at an average of eight, on a scale from one to 10 with 10 being excellent.

3. The highest percentage of telephone survey respondents reported that a household member had participated in hiking and walking, on-road biking, and swimming in pools. Survey respondents indicated that members of their household participated in individual or family recreational activities more than organized sports. Nature education programs was the activity that showed the most significant difference between the percentage of respondents interested in the activity and the percentage participating in the activity.
4. For activities presently offered at Washington County parks such as—ice skating, cross country skiing on ungroomed trails, beach swimming, canoeing, fishing, jogging, hiking and walking, playgrounds, picnicking, recreational boating, and pleasure driving—County parks were mentioned most often as the locations for these activities. Organized sports offered at County parks such as volleyball, basketball, and soccer were most commonly pursued at County parks. Activities such as—disc golf, mountain biking, off-road trail biking, football, dog training or exercising, snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and nature education programs—took place most often at Washington County Parks, even though these activities are not formally provided for at County parks. Softball, swimming in pools, and tennis most commonly took place in sites in the County owned by local units of government. A private facility was the most frequently mentioned place for golfing and camping. Private yards and/or nearby streets and neighborhood areas in the County were most commonly used for roller hockey, on-road biking, and archery. The activities most likely to have occurred outside the County at sites owned by local units of government were visiting water slides or parks and baseball.
5. Fifty-seven percent of respondents replied affirmatively that members of their household would have participated or participated more often in specified recreational activities if sites or facilities for such activities had been available closer to home.
6. Twenty-nine percent of respondents replied affirmatively that there were things that would make it more likely that they or members of their household would use Washington County parks more often. The highest percentage of respondents cited a better understanding of what is available.
7. A high level of support was expressed for conserving land for public parks, recreation, water quality, and wildlife habitat. More than half of respondents agreed that County government is doing enough to preserve natural resources and open space, that the County should provide a system of recreation trails to connect County parks and other public recreational lands and trails, and that County government is doing enough to provide access to lakes and waterways.
8. Telephone survey respondents expressed strong support for public acquisition of woodlands and wetlands; more than half of respondents expressed support for County acquisition of lands for new County parks; and less than half of respondents expressed support for improving or expanding facilities at existing County parks. Over half of the respondents favored a combination of taxes, bonds, and user fees to finance these activities. Very few respondents favored increased taxes to pay for land acquisition or park improvements.
9. Strong support was expressed for Washington County to provide a nature center, and significantly less support was expressed for Washington County to own and operate additional golf courses.
10. Individuals who responded affirmatively that the County should take action to acquire lands for resource protection purposes and to expand the park system indicated these expanded facilities should be used for hiking and walking, children's playgrounds, beach swimming, fishing, and picnicking. Respondents indicated that Washington County should provide for activities that are not already offered in the County, such as swimming in pools, and water slides/water parks.
11. The results of the 2002 telephone survey were generally similar to the telephone survey conducted in conjunction with the previous County park and open space plan in 1996, although some notable

differences exist. Respondents expressed a greater interest in water slides/water parks in the 2002 survey compared to the 1996 survey. User fees were the overall preferred mechanism in the 1996 survey, compared to a combination of taxes, bonds, and user fees as the preferred mechanism in the 2002 survey.

Mail Survey

1. Mail survey respondents indicated park facilities were reserved at Ackerman's Grove, Glacier Hills, Homestead Hollow, Ridge Run, and Sandy Knoll parks. Facilities at Sandy Knoll Park were reserved slightly more often. A closed shelter was reserved the most, by 63 percent of the respondents.
2. Adults aged 18 to 64 were present at nearly all functions. Children 13 years or younger were present at about 73 percent of all functions, while high-school-aged individuals were present at 57 percent of all functions. Those 65 years of age and over were present at almost half of park functions.
3. Forty-seven percent of respondents had reserved a park site for a group picnic, 24 percent reserved a site for a party, and 11 percent reserved the site for such functions as weddings, school reunions, and organized sporting events. Another 18 percent reserved a site for some other activity or function than those mentioned above, including graduations, special events, club events, and showers.
4. Respondents identified the most important feature at the facility they reserved to be the availability of electricity. Other important features were proximity to bathroom, size of shelter, and proximity to parking. The least important feature was the availability of heat.
5. Seventy percent of respondents would not reserve an outdoor area adjacent to a shelter building; a high rating was given to the ease of access, cleanliness, and overall opinion of the facility reserved; and picnic areas and playground equipment were used the most when reserving a site at a Washington County park.
6. Overall, there were more positive features identified at the reserved site by respondents than negative features. Amenities such as restroom facilities, shelters, picnic tables, and barbecue grills and fire pits were the most frequently cited positive features.
7. The majority of suggestions for improving park facilities related to park amenities, particularly providing additional dumpsters and recycling containers. Other suggestions related to improving park administration and improving shelter amenities. Recreation facilities such as dog parks, playground equipment, and volleyball courts, and park amenities such as additional benches/tables and additional dumpsters/recycling containers were cited most frequently as desired park facilities.
8. A telephone reservation system was preferred by most respondents. Almost all responded that county staff had been helpful and courteous to them when making reservations. Most of the respondents were satisfied with the cost of reserving a County park site.
9. The results of the 2002 mail survey of park users were generally similar to the results of a mail survey conducted in conjunction with the previous County park and open space plan in 1996, although some differences exist. Survey respondents' comments regarding park restrooms were somewhat more positive in the 2002 survey than in the 1996 survey. As noted above, respondents in the 2002 survey indicated that they would prefer a telephone park reservation system; in the 1996 survey, respondents favored the in-person system employed by the County.