

2000 Midland County Recreation Needs Assessment

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Executive Summary

This recreation needs assessment for Midland County is based on a mail questionnaire sent to a representative sample of 672 registered voters. Researchers from the Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources at Michigan State University conducted the study under contract with Midland County. The survey had 380 (56.5%) respondents and provides clear direction for the Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission as they update their county park master plan for the next five years.

Key highlights of the study include:

- Midland County residents are motivated by a wide variety of factors to participate in outdoor recreation. Those rated most important were being outside, fun and enjoyment, relaxation and enjoying nature.
- Midland County residents are active in outdoor recreation in Midland County, with walking/hiking, relaxing, scenic driving, picnicking and nature study the five most commonly done activities.
- Ninety-three percent of Midland County households are familiar with one or more Midland County Park, with Sanford Lake and the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail the most familiar. The most visited Midland County Park is the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail.
- The five most common recreational activities in Midland County Parks are walking/hiking, relaxing, picnicking, paved trail biking and scenic driving.
- The attributes of Midland County Parks with the highest performance ratings are the beauty of the parks, safety and security, abundance of nature, cleanliness and quality of facilities. These were rated from “very good” (highest possible rating) to “OK” by more than 94% of County residents. All other attributes were rated from “very good” to “OK” by more than 91% of the County’s residents.
- Residents generally support the acquisition of additional parkland, with the strongest support for acquiring more land to conserve river shorelines. Ten percent were not in favor of additional land acquisition for County Parks.
- Residents expressed support for the most potential facility developments in parks. The five receiving the most support for additional development were picnic areas, picnic shelters, multiple purpose non-motorized trails, shoreline access and environmental education/nature interpretation facilities.

December, 2000; Submitted by Michigan State University

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Introduction

This needs assessment is part of the process of updating the Parks and Recreation Master Plan of Midland County, last revised in 1995. It also fulfills a key requirement of the Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund to apply for grant monies to acquire and develop park and recreation land. The Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources of Michigan State University (MSU) conducted the assessment under contract with Midland County, with additional funding by the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station.

The needs assessment was also done in conjunction with a multi-year MSU research project about the benefits of rail-trails, which uses the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail as a case study. The Michigan Department of Transportation and the Michigan Agricultural Experiment Station were the primary funding agencies for the benefit study. The relationship of the two studies was symbiotic in that a segment of the needs assessment questionnaire focused on the rail-trail, strengthening the results of the rail-trail benefit study beyond data gathered in on-site surveys and observations during 2000. Those rail-trail observations and on-site surveys in turn provide valuable information about the use of the rail-trail by non-residents of the county, revealing the regional benefits of Midland County Parks.

Methods

The assessment was conducted using a mail questionnaire sent to a sample of registered Midland County voters. The sample was identified using “motor voter” records that are initially gathered by the Michigan Secretary of State and subsequently electronically provided to the appropriate townships and cities. Those units of government made the files available to the researchers for sample selection. Of the approximately 56,000 who have a driver’s license and are 18 years old (hence a registered voter using the motor voter system) an initial sample of 702 (1.2%) were systematically selected with a random start after the voters had been stratified by voting precinct.

Each person was mailed a 39-question, 11-page mail survey, along with an explanatory cover letter and a business reply envelope (Appendices A and B). The questionnaire was designed to meet both the current situation and future needs of the Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission and to be comparable to the last general public survey conducted by the Commission in updating the master plan in 1980.

Topics for the questionnaire were discussed at the February 9, 2000 meeting of the Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission. The questionnaire and cover letter, as well as the study procedures, were reviewed and approved by the MSU Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects prior to printing and distribution.

The first mailing of the questionnaire was done during May 2000. Within three weeks, a postcard reminder was sent to encourage response to all non-respondents. Following that a second and third mailing were sent to those not responding with a second copy of the survey questionnaire, business reply envelope and revised cover letter. The third mailing was sent by certified mail. The second mailing of the questionnaire was sent in June 2000 and the third and final mailing in July 2000.

Survey Response

Of the original 702 questionnaires, the US Postal Service returned 119 after the first mailing because of bad addresses. Problems included no longer at the stated address, forwarding order expired, no such number, etc. This comprised 17% of addresses, a very high proportion of bad addresses considering this was to be a list of current voters. All bad addresses were replaced with newly selected participants selected in the same systematic manner as the original sample. This process continued through the second and third mailings as additional bad addresses were returned in a less timely manner.

In total, 831 registered voters were finally selected (Table 1), of which 154 had bad addresses. In addition, five individuals selected were deceased. Hence, the actual sample with no address problems was 672. Of those, 380 (56.5%) completed and returned the questionnaire. Another 53 (7.8%) responded by refusing to complete the survey and mailing it back. The remaining 239 (35.7%) never communicated with the researchers.

Table 1. Response Rates

Original sample size	Unreachable (bad addresses or deceased individuals)	Adjusted sample size	Returned	Overall response rate
831	159	672	380	56.5%

Results

Demographic Profile of Respondents

The majority of respondents (61.7%) were female (Table 2). Over half had lived in Midland County for more than 20 years (Table 3). The average number of years respondents had lived in Midland County was 28 years.

In examining the township/city of residence, Midland City/Township accounted for about 55% of the respondents and the rest (45%) were from the remainder of the county (Table 4). This proportion is very similar to the population of Midland County as noted in the 1990 census as Midland City and Township accounted for 53% of the county's population and the remainder of the county was 47%.

Full-time employment was the most common job status for respondents, followed by retired and part-time employment (Table 5). Education levels of the respondents were higher than Michigan as a whole, with over two-thirds having some college (Table 6). Reported household median income range was similar to the state median, falling between forty and sixty thousand dollar pre-tax income for 1999 (Table 7). Almost one quarter of respondents declined to provide information about income. Respondents were most likely to come from a two adult household (Table 8). The average respondent was 45 years of age and the average age of a child in a respondent household was 9 years of age. The most common adult age group was 36 to 45 years old and children tended to be younger (Tables 9 and 10)

Table 2. Gender of Respondents

Gender	Percent
Male	38.3
Female	<u>61.7</u>
Total	100.0

Table 3. Number of Years Respondent Lived in Midland County

Number of Years	Percent
One year or less	2.4
2 to 10 years	19.2
11 to 20 years	17.1
21 to 30 years	24.5
31 to 40 years	13.6
More than 40 years	<u>23.2</u>
Total	100.0

Table 4. Township of Residence

Township	Percent
Midland	54.9
Jerome	6.7
Homer	5.8
Warren	5.2
Lee	4.5
Lincoln	3.8
Larkin	3.6
Ingersoll	3.0
Edenville	2.8
Mills	2.3
Greendale	1.9
Geneva	1.4
Mt. Haley	1.4
Jasper	1.1
Porter	1.1
Hope	<u>0.5</u>
Total	100.0

Table 5. Employment Status of Respondents

Employment status	Percent
Employed full time	48.0
Retired	26.3
Employed part time	9.9
Homemaker	7.5
Self-employed	6.2
Student	1.1
Unemployed	0.5
Other	<u>0.5</u>
Total	100.0

Table 6. Number of Years Respondents Completed in School/College

Completed years	Percent
8 to 12 years	32.2
13 to 16 years	45.5
17 to 20 years	19.8
More than 20 years	<u>2.5</u>
Total	100.0

Table 7. Total 1999 Annual Household Income (Before Taxes) of Respondents

Income	Percent	Valid percent
Less than \$20,000	9.5	12.2
\$20,000 - \$39,999	17.1	22.1
\$40,000 - \$59,999	19.3	24.9
\$60,000 - \$79,999	11.7	15.1
\$80,000 or more	19.8	<u>25.6</u>
Choose not to answer	<u>22.6</u>	
Total	100.0	100.0

Table 8. Summary of Household Composition

Type of household	Percent
Two adult household	41.4
Two adult + children household	25.1
More than two adults household	10.2
More than two adults + children household	10.2
Single adult	9.3
Single parent	<u>3.8</u>
Total	100.0

Table 9. Age of Adults in Household

Age	Percent
18 – 25 years	13.3%
26 – 35 years	16.5
36 – 45 years	23.2
46 – 55 years	19.8
56 – 65 years	14.0
66 years and older	<u>13.2</u>
Total	100.0

Table 10. Age of Children in Household

Age	Percent
0 – 5 years	27.9%
6 – 10 years	29.4
11 – 13 years	18.0
14 – 18 years	<u>24.7</u>
Total	100.0

General Recreation Characteristics

Midland County residents had a wide range of **motives** for participating in outdoor recreation (Table 11). The four motives rated as the most important were being outside, fun and enjoyment, relaxation and enjoying nature. Each was rated as very or extremely important to more than 70% of respondents. Those motives with the lowest level of importance were training for sports and studying other cultures. Each was rated as very or extremely important by less than 15% of the respondents.

Table 11. Reasons for Outdoor Recreation

Reason	Percent					Mean
	Not at all important (1)	Slightly important (2)	Moderately important (3)	Very important (4)	Extremely important (5)	
Be outside	3.0%	1.4%	15.5%	47.4%	32.7%	4.1
Fun & enjoyment	4.8	2.8	17.7	40.8	33.8	4.0
Relaxation	3.9	4.2	17.9	45.3	28.8	3.9
Enjoy nature	3.6	4.4	20.6	40.8	30.6	3.9
Promote health	5.3	8.1	31.0	36.9	18.7	3.6
Spend free time	7.3	11.8	26.3	40.6	14.0	3.4
Explore new places	8.5	11.4	30.4	31.3	18.5	3.4
Exercise	5.3	14.3	36.1	31.4	12.9	3.3
Be with others	12.1	16.7	34.2	23.7	13.3	3.1
Be alone	16.8	23.1	27.6	21.7	10.8	2.9
Train for sports	51.3	19.3	15.9	7.5	6.1	2.0
Study other cultures	53.3	25.2	14.9	5.2	1.4	1.8

When asked about participation in selected **general** outdoor recreation activities in Midland County, more than half reported relaxing/hanging out, scenic driving, picnicking and nature study during the past 12 months (Table 12). Least common activities were mushroom/berry picking, visiting historical sites, camping and hunting. However, more than 25% of households had one or more members that participated in these least common activities.

In terms of selected Midland County **water-based** outdoor activities, participation in swimming was by far the most common (Table 13). Sunbathing and open water fishing also involved more than one-third of respondent households. Least commonly done in the county were water skiing, sailing and kayaking, which all involved less than 10% of the households responding.

Walking/hiking was the most commonly reported **trail** activity with seven in ten households involved (Table 14). In addition, over a third reported that one or more members of their household bicycled on roads or bicycled on paved trails. Least common trail activities in the county were mountain biking, snowmobiling, skate boarding and outdoor wheel chair/walker use, each of which involved less than 10% of households.

The proportion of households with one or more members participating in **sports** was lower than for general outdoor recreation or trail activities. The highest incidence of participation was in golf, with one-third of the households playing in Midland County (Table 12). Besides golf, only softball/baseball involved more than one-quarter of the households. Less than 10% of households had one or more participants in football, roller hockey, ice hockey or disc golf.

Table 12. Outdoor Activities done in Midland County, General Activities ^a

General Activities	Percent
Relax/hang out	67.4
Scenic drive	60.2
Picnic	58.0
Nature study/observation	54.9
Playground	45.9
Special event/show	40.3
Outdoor photography	28.1
Hunt	27.6
Camp	26.5
Visit historical sites	26.3
Mushroom/berry pick	26.0

a. M.A.A. (Multiple Answers Allowed)

Table 13. Outdoor Activities done in Midland County, Water Activities ^a

Water Activities	Percent
Swim	49.1
Sunbathe	37.4
Open water fish	31.0
Power boat	19.1
Canoe	18.8
Ice fish	13.8
Personal watercraft	13.3
Water ski	9.3
Sail	5.0
Kayak	4.5

a. M.A.A.

Table 14. Outdoor Activities done in Midland County, Trail Activities ^a

Trail Activities	Percent
Walk/hike	70.8
Bicycling on roads	47.5
Paved trail biking	36.6
In-line skating	32.4
Run/jog	22.8
Cross country ski	12.8
Off road vehicle use	11.9
Unpaved trail biking	9.5
Snowmobile	8.8
Skateboard	7.4
Outdoor wheel chair/walker	1.9

a. M.A.A.

Table 15. Outdoor Activities done in Midland County, Sports Activities ^a

Sports	Percent
Golf	33.2
Softball/baseball	25.3
Basketball	22.8
Soccer	13.0
Tennis	12.7
Football	9.3
Roller hockey	7.2
Ice hockey	6.6
Disc golf	3.4

a. M.A.A.

The majority of respondents had visited most major public recreation sites in Midland County other than those operated by the Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission (Table 16). Over 90% had visited the Midland County Fairgrounds, the Tridge/Farmer’s Market, the Midland Community Center, Emerson Park and the Dow Gardens. The Tridge/Farmer’s Market, Midland County Fairgrounds, Emerson Park and the Community Center had the highest proportion of visitation within the past year. Sites that relatively few had ever visited and that had the lowest levels of recent visitation were Black Creek Forest Campground, the Au Sable State Forest and the West Midland Family Center.

Table 16. Public Recreation Sites (not including Midland County Facilities) in Midland County Visited

Selected Local Recreation Areas	Percent			Total
	Visited in past 12 months	Visited, but not in past 12 months	Never visited	
Tridge/Framer's Market	73.5	20.9	5.6	100.0
Midland County Fairgrounds	69.5	26.8	3.7	100.0
Emerson Park	64.9	25.7	9.4	100.0
Midland Community Center	63.1	28.1	8.8	100.0
Plymouth Park	57.9	30.0	12.1	100.0
Dow Gardens	49.4	40.9	9.7	100.0
Midland Civic Arena	49.0	36.5	14.5	100.0
Chippewa Nature Center	38.6	46.1	15.3	100.0
Midland City Forest	32.2	48.1	19.7	100.0
Midland Soccer Complex	19.1	19.9	61.0	100.0
Midland Community Tennis Center	14.5	26.4	59.1	100.0
West Midland Family Center	13.9	17.5	68.6	100.0
Au Sable State Forest	9.3	21.1	69.6	100.0
Black Creek Forest Campground	8.0	17.0	75.0	100.0

Experience with Midland County Parks

Of the six currently operating Midland County Parks, only the Pere Marquette Rail Trail was reported as being very familiar to more than half of the respondents (Table 17). Three parks, Laur Big Salt River, Manitou and Pine Haven were not at all familiar to more than half of the respondents. Seven percent reported that they were not at all familiar with any Midland County Park. Reported levels of visitation closely correlated with the familiarity of parks (Tables 18 and 19). Seventy-two percent of respondent households had one or more members visit a Midland County Park within the previous 12 months and 22% had visited one or more of the parks, but not within the past 12 months.

Of those who have never visited a Midland County Park, four reasons were cited in response to an open-ended question about their reason for not visiting. They include age/health, no interest in activities available, recreation needs are better met elsewhere, and lack of knowledge/information about the parks. For those who have not visited in the past 12 months, some of the constraints were different. They included lack of time for recreation and travel distance to reach a county park. The four factors that influenced those who had never visited the parks were also mentioned. A full listing of all responses is available in Appendix C.

While over 60% cited the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail as the park their household visited most frequently, less than half noted the Rail-Trail as their favorite park (Table

20). Both Sanford and Pine Haven were more likely to be cited as the respondent's favorite park than they were to be noted as the most frequently visited park.

In response to an open-ended question about why a specific county park was their favorite, different parks displayed different attributes. The Pere Marquette Rail-Trail was mostly chosen for the many trail-related activities, convenient access, and the sense of safety users felt. Sanford was primarily chosen for water-related opportunities and the wide range of activities. Those who chose Pine Haven principally cited its aesthetic appeal and trail activities such as cross country skiing, hiking and mountain biking. Veterans Park was most commonly selected because of its uncrowded and natural setting. The few who chose Manitou Park cited its rustic, quiet qualities, while no one cited Laur Big Salt as their favorite. All responses for each park are listed in Appendix D.

The on-going benefits study of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail has also demonstrated the regional attraction of the Midland County Parks. Approximately 15% of the 564 respondents to on-site self-administered questionnaires from May – September 2000 were residents of other counties. This has a positive impact on the image of Midland County and on its economy, as visitors purchase restaurant meals, bicycling supplies, grocery/convenience store food and beverages and lodging. An economic analysis of the Midwest Tandem Bike Rally that focused much of its activity on the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail, showed that this event accounted for at least \$218,000 of tourism spending in Midland County, generating 1,100 room nights in local hotels/motels. Further, 26% of the Tandem participants were from Michigan, thus Midland County's reputation and economy was enhanced across the 27 other states and Canadian provinces where participants resided. Over 90% of the respondents rated the condition of the Rail-Trail as good and 46% thought it likely they would return in the future to again ride the Rail-Trail (Vogt et al. 2000).

Visitation patterns for those who visited the Midland County Parks were similar for respondents and other members of their household (Table 21). Predominantly, the respondent and other household members noted visiting a few times a year, while less than 15% of respondents or other members of their households visited a Midland County Park weekly or more frequently.

Table 17. Respondents Familiarity with Midland County Parks

County Parks	Percent			Total
	Not at all familiar	Moderately familiar	Very familiar	
Pere Marquette Rail Trail	19.0	29.8%	51.2%	100.0%
Sanford Lake Park	17.4	48.1	34.5	100.0
Veteran's Memorial Park	48.2	38.0	13.9	100.0
Pine Haven Recreation Area	65.1	22.9	12.0	100.0
Manitou Park	82.0	12.4	5.6	100.0
Laur Big Salt River Park	89.0	6.7	4.2	100.0

Table 18. Midland County Parks Visited

County Parks	Percent			Total
	Visited in the past 12 months	Visited, but not in past 12 months	Never visited	
Pere Marquette Rail Trail	64.2%	13.4%	22.3%	100.0%
Sanford Lake Park	37.5	46.0	16.5	100.0
Veteran's Memorial Park	17.8	37.0	45.2	100.0
Pine Haven Recreation Area	12.6	22.3	65.1	100.0
Manitou Park	5.8	8.1	86.1	100.0
Laur Big Salt River Park	3.2	5.8	91.0	100.0

Table 19. Midland County Park Most Visited

County Parks	Percent
Pere Marquette Rail Trail	61.0
Sanford Lake Park	29.2
Veteran's Memorial Park	5.1
Pine Haven Recreation Area	3.4
Manitou Park	1.3
Total	100.0

Table 20. Most Favorite Park

County Parks	Percent
Pere Marquette Rail Trail	45.9
Sanford Lake Park	37.2
Pine Haven Recreation Area	9.7
Veteran's Memorial Park	6.1
Manitou Park	<u>1.0</u>
Total	100.0

Table 21. Number of Times Respondents and Their Household Members Visited Any of the Midland County Parks in the Past 12 Months

Person in household	Percent					Total
	Few times per year	Once per month	Couple of times per month	Weekly	Daily	
Respondent	55.0%	9.2%	21.8%	12.5%	1.5%	100.0%
Spouse or another adult	58.8	10.8	20.3	8.7	1.7	100.0
Children (#1 oldest)	53.1	14.3	19.7	10.9	2.0	100.0
Children (#2)	55.5	12.6	19.3	10.9	1.7	100.0
Children (#3)	58.6	19.0	17.2	3.4	1.7	100.0
Children (#4)	75.9	13.8	6.9	3.4	0.0	100.0

Recreation Interests and Activities in Midland County Parks

For those county residents who visited the Midland County Parks in the past 12 months, the most common **general** recreational activities in the parks were relaxing/hanging out and picnicking (Table 22). Least common general activities were mushroom/berry picking and outdoor photography, which each involved more than 10% of visitor households. **Water based** park activities were most frequently swimming, sunbathing or fishing (Table 23). Kayaking, sailing and water skiing were the least common water based activities. **Trail** activities were most likely to be walking/hiking and paved trail bicycling and least likely to involve outdoor wheel chair/walker use (Table 24). Examining all activities in Midland County Parks the five most common Midland County Park recreation activities were: walking/hiking (58.7%), relaxing/hanging out (46.7%), picnicking (41.8%), paved trail biking (37.6%) and scenic driving (34.4%).

Table 22. General Activities Engaged in, at any of the Midland County Parks ^a

General Activity	Percent
Relax/hang out	46.7
Picnic	41.8
Scenic drives	34.4
Playground	33.2
Nature study/observation	33.0
Special event	26.1
Outdoor photography	14.4
Mushroom/berry pick	10.9

a. M.A.A.

Table 23. Water Activities Engaged in, at any of the Midland County Parks ^a

Water Activity	Percent
Swim	30.7
Sunbathe	25.3
Open water fish	19.2
Power boat	10.0
Personal watercraft	9.2
Canoe	8.9
Ice fish	5.2
Water ski	4.0
Sail	2.0
Kayak	2.0

a. MAA

Table 24. Trail Activities Engaged in, at any of the Midland County Parks ^a

Trail Activity	Percent
Walk/hike	58.7
Paved trail biking	37.6
In-line skating	25.6
Run/jog	14.5
Unpaved trail biking	8.3
Cross country ski	7.2
Outdoor wheel chair/walker	1.7

a. M.A.A.

Service Performance of Midland County Parks

When asked to rate the Midland County Parks on selected areas of performance, all areas of performance had higher average ratings than “OK” (Table 25). In no instance did more than 10% of the respondents rate any aspect of the park as either very poor or poor. The three highest rated areas were the beauty of parks, sense of safety and security in visiting the parks and the abundance of nature in the parks. Those areas that were rated the lowest were the level of crowding, the helpfulness of the staff and the price of admission.

The overall rating of Midland County Parks management was a mean score of 3.7, between OK and good. When asked in an open-ended question for the reason for their overall rating, respondents provided a range of reasons. Those who rated the parks as “very good” or “good” were most likely to cite good maintenance, a sense of security and the aesthetic appeal of the parks. Those who rated park management as “OK” were most likely to mention a lack of visible staff or a lack of information or experience with the parks. The few who rated management as “very poor” or “poor”, cited concerns about a lack of management visibility and inefficiency. The complete set of responses is found in Appendix E.

Respondents rated the influence of the Midland County Parks to be positive on neighborhoods, families, communities and themselves (Table 26). The influence on the County as a whole was rated the most positive, while the influence on the respondent’s neighborhood was rated somewhat less positive. For any segment, 59% or more rated the parks to be moderately or highly positive, while no more than 4% rated the influence of the parks as very or moderately negative.

Table 25. Performance of the Six Midland County Parks Based On Respondents' Knowledge and/or Experience

Characteristics	Percent					Mean
	Very poor (1)	Poor (2)	OK (3)	Good (4)	Very good (5)	
Beauty of parks	0.0%	1.1%	24.6%	50.0%	24.3%	4.0
Safety and security	0.7	3.6	24.9	48.0	22.7	3.9
Abundance of wildlife/trees/nature	0.0	2.6	31.1	41.8	24.5	3.9
Cleanliness	0.7	5.4	27.0	47.8	19.1	3.8
Quality of facilities	0.7	1.4	36.3	44.6	16.9	3.8
Overall management	0.4	2.6	37.6	44.4	15.0	3.7
Range of recreational opportunities	2.3	3.8	42.3	40.4	11.3	3.6
Price of admission	3.5	5.4	44.7	28.8	17.5	3.5
Helpfulness of staff	2.1	5.1	47.9	33.5	11.4	3.5
Level of crowding	1.1	4.2	52.3	32.6	9.8	3.5

Table 26. Influence of Midland County Parks

Influence on:	Percent					Mean
	Very negative (1)	Moderate negative (2)	Neutral (3)	Moderate positive (4)	Very positive (5)	
Midland County	1.0	1.0	20.6	41.9	35.4	4.1
Respondent's community	1.4	1.7	22.9	43.2	30.8	4.0
Respondent	0.6	1.9	34.9	39.6	23.1	3.8
Other household members	1.0	1.3	36.5	38.8	22.4	3.8
Respondent's neighborhood	1.0	0.7	39.2	38.9	20.1	3.8

Support for Midland County Parks

Respondents were generally supportive of acquiring additional parkland in Midland County (Table 27). Their strongest preference was for land acquisition that conserved additional river shoreline, with 53% expressing support, 38% neutral and 9% expressing opposition. However, there was also substantial support for acquiring land to provide for the development of a wider range of recreational opportunities, more land for open space conservation and more land for paved trails. Approximately 10% supported no further acquisition of county parkland.

Respondents were generally supportive of a list of new facility developments for current or future parks suggested by the Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission (Table 28). For example, 69% supported the development of new picnic areas, 25% were neutral and 6% were opposed. For all the proposed list of potential developments, more respondents were in support than opposition to the development with the exception of developing a golf course.

When asked if there were other facilities not mentioned on the close-ended list that residents wanted to see developed and maintained, about one in four suggested an additional facility. Those suggestions included more support facilities in parks such as bathrooms/drinking water, improved fishing opportunities such as fishing piers, winter sports facilities, additional swimming opportunities, camping, motorized trails and opening some parklands to hunting. For a complete listing of all suggestions, see Appendix F.

Respondents favored continuing the current mix of funding to pay for future park operations (Table 29). The area with the most substantial support for increased park funding was to increase the use of endowment funds for park operations, with almost half supporting this approach. The single largest current source of funding for the County Parks is County General Fund appropriations. Over one fourth of the respondents favored an increase in such funding, while two-thirds wanted it to stay the same and 7% wanted it to be decreased or eliminated.

In regards to potential new funding sources, respondents were slightly favorable to developing revenue-producing facilities at parks and moderately opposed to a one-half mill property tax levy for park operations (Table 30). Forty-six percent opposed such a millage, while 22% were neutral and 32% supported it.

Table 27. Level of Support for Future Land Acquisition Options

Options	Percent					Mean
	Strongly oppose (1)	Moderately oppose (2)	Neither oppose or support (3)	Moderately support (4)	Strongly support (5)	
More land for conserving river shorelines	5.4%	3.7%	37.7%	27.4%	25.7%	3.6
More land for the development of recreation opportunities	7.0	4.9	37.8	31.4	18.9	3.5
More land for conserving open space	4.6	6.9	43.1	25.1	20.2	3.5
More land for paved trails	7.8	6.9	36.3	30.5	18.4	3.5
Do not acquire more land	29.5	16.1	45.2	4.5	4.8	2.4

Table 28. Level of Support for Future Land Development Potentials

Developments	Percent					Mean
	Strongly oppose (1)	Moderately oppose (2)	Neither oppose or support (3)	Moderately support (4)	Strongly support (5)	
Picnic areas	2.3%	3.8%	25.2%	46.1%	22.6%	3.8
Picnic shelters	2.9	4.6	30.6	42.5	19.4	3.7
Multiple purpose non motorized trails	5.0	3.8	30.0	38.5	22.7	3.7
Shore access	4.4	2.9	33.3	39.2	20.1	3.7
Environmental education/nature interpretation facilities	2.9	5.5	36.4	33.8	21.3	3.7
Carry in water access for canoes/kayaks	4.4	3.5	41.0	30.8	20.3	3.6
Auto parking areas	5.8	7.0	44.4	30.1	12.6	3.4
Single purpose non motorized trails	7.4	14.2	43.1	26.0	9.4	3.2
Auto access roads	7.6	13.2	44.0	25.8	9.4	3.2
Water access for trailered boats	12.4	11.3	41.3	24.6	10.4	3.1
Golf course	18.3	17.7	34.2	15.3	14.5	2.9

Table 29. Preferred Future Funding Allocation from Current Sources

Sources of funding	Percent				Total
	Increase	Stay the same	Decrease	Be eliminated	
Endowment funds for park operations	42.7%	52.8%	3.2%	1.3%	100.0%
County general fund appropriations	26.1	66.8	5.9	1.2	100.0
Fees for picnic shelter rental	16.9	68.6	8.5	6.0	100.0
Fees for Sanford Lake Park entry	16.1	66.1	13.0	4.8	100.0

Table 30. Level of Support for Potential Funding Options

Funding options	Percent					Mean
	Strongly oppose (1)	Moderately oppose (2)	Neither oppose or support (3)	Moderately support (4)	Strongly support (5)	
Develop revenue producing facilities at parks	15.6%	13.5%	30.0%	27.4%	13.5%	3.1
Initiate a county-wide millage of ½ mill for park operations	28.2	17.6	22.3	21.1	10.9	2.7

Comparison with the 1980 Midland County General Public Recreation Survey

The Design Enterprise Limited (1980) of Dayton, Ohio, conducted the last general population survey of Midland County residents concerning recreation needs. A telephone survey of 1,000 random households was made using phone numbers acquired from existing telephone books. Members of the League of Women Voters in Midland County, senior citizen groups and County staff conducted the interviews. Of the 1,000 households survey, 624 (62.4%) responded and completed the interview.

Demographics have changed since 1980. The population has increased from the 1980 Census figure of 73,578 to 75,651 in the 1990 Census to an estimated 80,534 in 1996. Today, almost half the county's residents live outside the City of Midland and Midland Township compared to the 38% who lived outside the City of Midland in 1980.

Sanford was the most familiar and most widely used county park for survey respondents in 1980. At that time, 40% of the respondents reported at least occasional visitation. This was prior to the development of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. Today 83% of households responding have one or more members who have visited Sanford Lake County Park and 81% who have visited the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. During the past 12 months, 64% of households had one or more members visit the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail and 37% visited Sanford Lake Park.

In 1980, the study concluded that natural resource oriented parks are in the greatest demand for future acquisition and development. This is similar to the response in the current study, where acquiring parklands along rivers and preserving open space and nature were most highly rated.

Another similarity is that respondents in 1980 were most favorable to park developments that promoted swimming and picnicking. From the selected list in the current study, picnicking was the most highly rated potential development, while additional swimming opportunities were not part of the list.

To pay for park operations and developments, 1980 respondents were most supportive of gifts, grants, the county budget and user fees; and least supportive of a county-wide millage or a bond issue. In 2000 the viewpoint is similar except that the development and use of endowment funds is now a viable and publicly supported option, based on Midland County's experiences with the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail and its supporting endowments.

In summary, the priorities of Midland County residents for county parks have not changed significantly since 1980. However, new types of parks and recreational opportunities have come onto the scene and traditional ones have continued. This may be one of the factors responsible for a greater proportion of residents using the available county park facilities now than two decades ago.

Implications for Midland County Parks

Residents in Midland County appear relatively active in outdoor recreation. The proximity of public land and an abundant natural resource base on private land, coupled with a modest county population under 100,000 people contribute to excellent access to outdoor recreation opportunities. Passive recreational activities such as picnicking, nature study, relaxing and scenic driving are popular. Residents have also responded to facilities that enhance outdoor recreation. For example, the members of a third or more of the households in the county walk/hike, bicycle or in-line skate, reflecting the influence of the Pere Marquette Rail-Trail and other trail opportunities.

The Midland County Parks play a role in the County's spectrum of recreation opportunities by providing natural resource based opportunities, open to all, that put residents and visitors in an enjoyable setting, allowing them to program their own activities. As the county's population expands and development continues, this opportunity will become more precious. While some Midland County Parks are currently unknown to most residents, as development continues they are likely to become more apparent as islands of more natural landscape among increasingly developed parcels.

County residents have recognized this through their support of additional parkland acquisition and development of facilities that will support additional, appropriate natural resource based recreation. Further, they have opted for an ecological approach, targeting the river corridors. This protection of the watershed will pay dividends in cleaner water and more abundant and diverse plant and wildlife communities, as well as providing water-based recreation and nature study opportunities. This is a positive and unique role for the county to play, as many other entities including cities, townships and the commercial and non-profit parts of the private sector, provide a wide variety of other recreation opportunities that are already well patronized and appreciated. However, these same entities cannot function as effectively to protect open space and watershed values across the county.

Paying to acquire, develop and manage new resources is always challenging. However, there is clear support for additional general fund support for park management and for the development of additional endowments to maintain parks. Partners can also facilitate the acquisition and protection of additional park resources. Cooperation with non-profit conservancies, environmentally savvy developers, the drain commissioner, power generating companies, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and other citizens, corporations and local entities can open new opportunities.

New funding sources supporting land acquisition and conservation practices on private lands are coming on line at the federal level. These include monies from the Conservation and Reinvestment Act of 2000 and the new state/federal partnership through the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program, targeted at the Saginaw Bay watershed, which includes Midland County. In addition, the use of other acquisition techniques such as conservation easements may hold promise. The key is to be innovative, build partnerships and to integrate recreational activities with safeguarding the productive capability of the environment.

Literature Cited

The Design Enterprise Limited. 1980. Summary Report Recreation Study Midland County, Michigan. Dayton, OH: The Design Enterprise Limited.

Vogt, C., Nelson, C., Stynes, D. and J. Fridgen. 2000. Study of 1999 Midwest Tandem Rally and Its Participants: A Focus on Midland County's Pere Marquette Rail-Trail. East Lansing, MI: Department of Park, Recreation and Tourism Resources, Michigan State University.

Appendix A

Mail Questionnaire

Appendix B

Letters Accompanying the Mail Questionnaire

First letter

May 8, 2000

«FIRST» «LAST»
«ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear «FIRST» «LAST»:

Michigan State University and Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission are cooperating to study recreation and park use in Midland County. The purpose of this study is to assess the current and future recreation needs of residents. The results of this study will be used for planning purposes and in grant applications for land acquisition and recreation facility development.

We are surveying a sample of 700 residents in Midland County. We acquired your name and address from voter registration records. If you are not a registered voter in Midland County, please let us know.

The enclosed questionnaire asks about recreation activities in which you and members of your household participate, use of specific parks and facilities in Midland County, and your evaluation of Midland County Parks. It also asks you to look to Midland County's needs in the future. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results.

Your help is critical in developing a better understanding of the recreation needs of Midland County residents. Please take the 20 or so minutes necessary to complete the questionnaire. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. However, if you choose not to participate, you will not suffer any penalty.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail it back to us in the postage paid envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact either of us at 517-353-5190 or e-mail vogtc@msu.edu. If you need to contact someone at Michigan State University other than the researchers about this survey, chairperson Dr. David Wright, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, can be reached at 517-355-2180 or by e-mail at ucrihs@msu.edu. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Charles Nelson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Christine A. Vogt, Ph.D.
Visiting Professor

Enc.

Second letter

June 7, 2000

«FIRST» «LAST»
«ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear «FIRST» «LAST»:

Recently you should have received a survey in the mail about Midland County Parks and Recreation opportunities from Michigan State University. We have not yet received your completed survey and are very interested in your opinions. If you returned the completed survey, thanks for your response. If you have not completed the survey, *please take the time to complete the enclosed survey. The results will be used by Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission to plan for Midland County's needs in the 21st century.*

We are surveying a sample of only 700 residents in Midland County, so your responses are very important. We acquired your name and address from "Motor-Voter" registration records. If you are not the person who this letter is addressed to, please return the letter with a note so that we can update our list.

Your help is absolutely critical in developing a better understanding of the recreation needs of Midland County residents. Please take the 20 minutes or so necessary to complete the questionnaire. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results. You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. However, if you choose not to participate, you will not suffer any penalty.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail it back to us in the postage paid envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact either of us at 517-353-5190 or e-mail vogtc@msu.edu. If you need to contact someone at Michigan State University other than the researchers about this survey, chairperson Dr. David Wright, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, can be reached at 517-355-2180 or by e-mail at ucrihs@msu.edu. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Charles Nelson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Christine A. Vogt, Ph.D.
Visiting Professor

Enc.

Third letter (certified mailing)

July 7, 2000

«FIRST» «LAST»
«ADDRESS»
«CITY», «STATE» «ZIP»

Dear «FIRST» «LAST»:

In the past six weeks, we have mailed you two copies of the same survey about Midland County's future. While we have received hundreds of responses, we have not received yours. If your response and this letter have crossed paths in the mail, then thank you for your participation and please accept our apologies. We are making this one final attempt to enlist your help by certified mail to emphasize the importance of your opinions and to ensure we have the correct address. Your input is important whether or not you use Midland County Parks and Recreation facilities or programs. Including all ages and types of individuals and households is vital in representing the range of Midland County residents.

The results of the survey will be used by the Midland County Parks and Recreation Commission to plan for Midland County's needs in the 21st century. We selected only 700 residents as a representative sample for Midland County, so your responses are very important. We acquired your name and address from "Motor-Voter" registration records. If you are not the person who this letter is addressed to and that person no longer lives in Midland County, please return the letter with a note so that we can account for each person.

Your help is absolutely critical in developing a better understanding of the recreation needs of Midland County residents. Please take the 20 or so minutes necessary to complete the questionnaire. Your responses are completely confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the results.

You indicate your voluntary agreement to participate by completing and returning this questionnaire. However, if you choose not to participate, you will not suffer any penalty.

When you have completed the questionnaire, please mail it back to us in the postage paid envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact either of us at: 517-353-5190 ext.116 or e-mail: vogtc@msu.edu. If you need to contact someone at Michigan State University other than the researchers about this survey, chairperson Dr. David Wright, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, can be reached at 517-355-2180 or by e-mail at: ucrihs@msu.edu. Thanks for your help.

Sincerely,

Charles Nelson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

Christine A. Vogt, Ph.D.
Visiting Professor

Enc.

Appendix C

Open-ended Responses

Reasons for not visiting Midland County Park and Recreation Facilities

Have Never Visited a Midland County Park (Survey question 7)

18 of the 21 people who have not visited a Midland County Park provided a reason for their decision.

Age, health, and ability

Health and arthritis
Health problems
We are seniors
Too old
No recreation activities that I can take part in

Not interested in available recreation opportunities

We are older people with other interests
No interest (2 mentions)
Too boring, and close to home
No need to go (2 mentions)

Recreation needs are better met elsewhere

We prefer going up north to use the parks
We prefer Saginaw County Park
Our recreational needs are met on private lands

Recently moved to Midland County, unaware of recreational opportunities

No time to visit yet, we just moved here
We just moved here and did not have time yet to visit
Not aware of parks and activities (2 mentions)

Have Not Visited a Midland County Park in the Past 12 Months (Survey question 7)

56 of the 79 people who have not visited a Midland County Park in the last 12 months provided a reason for their decision.

Distance to recreation opportunities

Distance from home
Don't live close enough to Midland
Live too far away, no time

Insufficient time to take advantage of recreation opportunities

Too busy with other activities
Too busy
No time
Not enough time
Didn't have vacation time
Work, didn't have time

Unaware of recreation opportunities

Lack of time, don't know they exist
Like to canoe in cleaner water, didn't know they exist
Never heard of them

Not interested in available recreation opportunities

Not interested (2 mentions)
Not really interested, no kids
We are not outdoor people
Had no reason to go, went when kids were young
No need to
Older, no reason to visit
No particular reason
Have no reason
Can't say

Recreation needs are better met elsewhere

No reason, recreate with family at Lake Charlevoix
Use city parks, camp elsewhere, kids moved away
Winters in Florida, northern lake property
Participate in sports and recreation at other sites
Our permanent Michigan home is in a Condo Campground
Go to Plymouth Park or home, live on nine acres of woods

Visit city of Midland's parks, walk in own community
My backyard (40 acres of woods) is better!

Age, health, and ability

70 years old, do not go to parks
Poor health
My husband was sick
My wife is handicapped, walking is not possible
Disability-need Amigo for long travel
Have difficulty walking, not enough benches for us

Travel to other locales

Like to get away from home
Traveling
Time traveling to other cities

Existing recreation opportunities are inadequate or unappealing

Don't like this area
I think the Rail Trail is a waste of our money
Do not appeal
They don't offer activities we seek right now
Didn't care to go
Do not have children at home anymore
More for kids than older people

Appendix D

Open-ended Responses

Favorite Midland County Park

Favorite Park and Why (Survey question 6)

Pere-Marquette Rail-Trail

86 of the 90 people who chose the Pere-Marquette Rail-Trail as their favorite Midland County Park provided a reason for their choice.

Multiple use

Playground, use without traffic, like Sanford in summer
Love to bike as family, trail is safe from traffic
Fun, scenic
Closest, picnic facilities, swimming, water access
Great walking, safe biking, pretty
Ease of use, very nice facility
Easy access from many locations, whole family enjoys
Scenic, get exercise
Variety of activities
Good place for walking and biking
Exercise, pleasant surroundings
Very well maintained, easy to bike & rollerblade on
It's made for walking & sightseeing
Paved trail, nice for walkers and riders
Fits best with activities walking and biking
Walking, biking and rollerblading
Use for walking and biking
It has so much to offer for bikes
Very accessible, offers good scenic route for exercise
Many possible activities, people watching
Place to skate, walk, bike, and take dog for walk
Love natural beauty and ease of bike riding and walking
Nice scenic place, biking, not many people
Love to run and bike with wonderful scenery
Easily accessible, fun, flexible
Paved, convenient
Beautiful scenery, quiet, safe
Great for rollerblading and biking
Lots to do

Offers versatility

Many areas to play on parks along trail
Something for everyone
It's great, can enjoy it by self or with others
Close, activities by it, biking
It has nature, walk, blade, and it is safe

Safety

Be outside and exercise without traffic
Safety, close to house, and parks
Go walking, biking and is safe for that
Like to bike in safe place
We like to ride bikes in a safe place
No motor vehicles
Safe for walking and bike riding
Safe to bike, rollerblade for my 3 small kids
Safe place to bike and rollerblade
We like to bike and it's a fun, safe trail

Family oriented

For family running and biking
Kids love to ride bikes and rollerblade
Great place to take kids

Close to home, easy access

It's close
Close enough to walk to or ride our bike to
Easy to get to
Easy access
It is convenient and close to home
Close, easy access
Close and useful
Close to work-run at lunch
Close to home, easy access, multi-use (walk, bike)
So many access locations

Pleasant place to exercise and recreate

Good exercise, fun
Good exercise
Our favorite activity is rollerblading
Rollerblading
Good for rollerblading
I rollerblade a lot
To rollerblade
Avid biker
Great for biking
We cycle a lot

Other

Use most often
I use it so often
Use the rail trail-unfamiliar with most parks

Only one we know of in Midland
Only one we have ever visited
Walk and ride most
Because of the rail trail
The paved trail, the bridge
Clean, neat
Rail-trail
Community activities held there
Fun zone in Plymouth Park
Favor Emerson Park along trail because of shelters
Being in our 70's, enjoy the walk, and flower area
Easy to use, can bike to Sanford for meal or desert
Nature
It's the only one we've visited

Sanford Lake Park

65 of the 73 people who chose Sanford Lake Park as their favorite Midland County Park provided a reason for their choice.

Multiple use

A lot to offer
Many activities
Most activities of all
More to see and do
Has something everyone in the family likes to do
Lots of picnic areas & availability of lake
Nice beach, shady picnic area, and boat launch
Beach and water
Beach for grandchildren, dock boat or Ski-do
Like to hang out in beach, play volleyball
Volleyball nets, swimming, picnic, shower, concessions
Kids like to play volleyball there and we use boat launch
Because we can swim, fish, and BBQ
Swim, fish, boat, picnic

Swimming and nice beach
Swimming, picnic, and recreation
Swimming, picnic
Swimming and picnic, needs more maintenance
We picnic and go boating
Boat and swim
Boating and fishing
Close, beach, swimming
Close by, beach, picnic area, and shaded
Close, not too crowded, can picnic, & swim
Clean and close
Clean, has showers, place for all ages kids to play
By the water, trees, grass, good activity to watch
Most woods, bike trails, size, few people
Personal watercraft and it's close
Easy access for watercraft and nice facilities
By the water, nice facility

Specifically water related

It's near the water
Because of the lake
Water (2 mentions)
Lake view
Water activities (2 mentions)
Swimming (3 mentions)
Accessible for boating
Boat launch
Easy access to boat launch
We take our boat
Boat accessibility
Fishing
Beach (3 mentions)

Close to home

Nearer to home

Pine Haven Recreation Area

18 of the 19 people who chose Pine Haven Recreation Area as their favorite Midland County Park provided a reason for their choice.

Multiple use

Very rustic, can ride horses, cross-country ski, and nice wood trail
Beautiful area, peaceful, never crowded
Can walk, hike, hunt, and photograph all in one place

Aesthetic appeal

Atmosphere, natural environment
Peaceful, enjoyable outside
Natural beauty
Natural setting
Varieties of natural flora, fauna
So beautiful
Enjoy wilderness

Closest park, we live on Sanford Lake
Close by and beautiful
Close to home (2 mentions)

Other

It's a good place to have fun
Fun place to be
Clean
Memories
We talk about past and future and it is very nice
Only one I've been to
Only one familiar with is Emerson, my favorite
We live on Sanford Lake, cross-country ski & enjoy Pine Haven
Facilities

Availability of trails

Cross country ski
Good cross country skiing
Mountain bike trails
Trails good for walk, run, ski, bike and wildflowers
Nice trails, varied terrain
Woods, sloping hills to walk

Not crowded

They are not as heavily used as some others are
Less crowded

Veteran’s Memorial Park

All twelve of the people who chose Veteran’s Memorial Park as their favorite Midland County Park provided a reason for their choice.

Multiple use

More privacy with variety of activities to do
Venue is conducive to many types of activities
Quiet, usually only a few other people
Nice nature walks, not too crowded
Recreation and walking

Nature, but please make it available to us

Perception of crowding

It is a quiet place and no one to bother you
I love the quiet peaceful park and large trees

Other

Aesthetic appeal

Nature

Boating accessible
Close to home
It shows how people died for the USA

Manitou Park

Both persons who chose Manitou Park as their favorite Midland County Park provided a reason for their choice.

Quiet, less people
Easy access, rustic

Laur Big Salt River Park

No respondent chose Laur Big Salt River Park as his or her favorite Midland County Park

Appendix E

Open-ended Responses

Evaluation of Midland County Parks and Recreation Department

Most important reason for overall management rating of the six Midland County Parks (Survey Question 11)

(266 of the 379 respondents provided an overall management rating for Midland County's six parks)

**Note: responses with two or more independent items were separated and placed in appropriate categories*

Reasons for not providing an overall management rating

(25 of the 113 respondents who did not provide an overall management rating provided a reason for their decision)

Insufficient information

Limited knowledge
Don't have enough knowledge to comment
Not familiar enough with parks to give judgement
Not familiar enough to rate
Just don't have any idea
Unknown, unable to answer
I don't have a clue about any of the parks
I didn't give a rating because I really don't know
No rating. Don't know how or who manages them
Can't make a fair judgement

Don't go there
No rating, not been to these parks
I am not really able to get to the parks often
Can't say, haven't been to any lately
Only been to Rail-trail. Don't know others

Other

Local paper reporting, friends who use parks
Don't use parks that charge admission
Cost
Management rating is of parks I visit (e.g., Emerson, Tridge, Plymouth, and the one on Manor)
Clean is good
The sanitation needs to be improved
Sanford Lake very dirty, never visited most others
None

Limited visitation

I don't go to them
Did not visit

Very poor rating

(The only person to rate the overall management as very poor provided a reason for their decision)

Never saw any signs of personnel or management

Poor rating

(Five of the seven people who rated the overall management as poor provided a reason for their decision)

Funds not used appropriately
Perceived inefficiency among city utility workers
Focus, care given to keeping the parks beautiful
Cleanliness and safety
One in walking distance to home

OK rating

(53 of the 100 people who rated the overall management as ok provided a reason for their decision)

Insufficient information, limited visitation, and interaction with management agents

Neutral. Not enough experience to rate
Unfamiliar
Little knowledge of the parks
Don't know
Ignorance
No first hand knowledge due to infrequent use
Hard to answer, never really seen management
Never dealt with management
Haven't seen management or used parks with- admission fee, we try use parks off-peak times don't- see staff either
No personal contact, observed things running okay
Not as familiar with all aspects as should be
Don't spend a lot of time at parks
Only been to the parks once in the last 12 months

Neutral inclination

Experienced a few parks one year ago, satisfied then.
Nothing remarkable either way
Most other categories rated three

In general most sites are average
They seem adequate

Good facility management

Good condition of facilities
How problems are dealt with and overall cleanliness
Cleanliness, trail upkeep, safety
Safety, beauty, cleanliness
Cleanliness (2 mentions)
The parks are clean
Most of time areas mowed and kept up
Lower staff needs and yet property is kept

Unfavorable impressions of management

You never see any
You don't always see staff, not always clean
Not enough, Sanford LAKE dirty, park is fine
I think that there could be more activities planned
Yearly boat launch pass at Sanford Lake is too high
Discontinued grooming trails at Pine Haven for- cross-country skiing
Vets Park was closed our last couple of visits

Glass in trail flattens tires of acquaintance
and me
Some are still being renovated and always
improve it
Could be better
The amount of money it costs
Not enough supervision on the playgrounds
Let too many kids be rowdy
More attention to bathrooms please

Other

Because I like to be a critic
From opinions of other people
Design and proximity to home
We have something here to do
Ask to
I feel it's the way it should be
Accessibility
Open availability
Plymouth
Because there is a need for these parks
Price and location
Natural

Good rating

(84 of the 118 people who rated the overall management as good provided a reason for their decision)

Facility management

Because the parks are kept up-Good job!!
Midland County Parks well kept (4
mentions)
Overall quality and maintenance of parks
(2 mentions)
Cleanliness (15 mentions)
All our parks seem well taken care of
Most are taken care of well
Everything is well maintained
Parks are well maintained (4 mentions)
Everything is clean and neat
Working facilities
Safe (4 mentions)
Accessible
Accessible to all
They are attractive
How well trails are maintained
Cleanliness, grooming up beach, Pere-
Marquette trail condition
Rail Trail and Sanford Park very well
maintained
Trails at Pine haven usually in good shape

The parks are clean, physical structures
maintained, facilities may not be improved
but are maintained
They all seem neat and clean-no garbage, no
vandalism
We enjoy everything the way the parks are
maintained
Upkeep (2 mentions)
Overall ease of use

Assumption, appearance of good
management

They appear to be well run
With proper supervision: OK. They all look
comfortable
Manitou closed for more than one summer,
Needs money
Assume good management because parks
seem good
Everything was ok so mgt. is doing good job
With current financial resources, doing a
good job

Aesthetic appeal of parks

We like to go away, see nature, and take small walks
I enjoy nature and visit parks primarily for nature
Beauty of parks (4 mentions)
These areas are all natural, peaceful
Abundance of wildlife, trees, etc.

Variety of recreation opportunities

Variety of activities
Range of recreational opportunities
Most parks have a lot of things for kids
Family oriented

Nonspecific personal experience

Word of mouth
My experience
Just my thinking of all
We enjoy ourselves when we visit

Nonspecific, positive inclination

Very good
No bad experiences
Better than many other parks in state
No problems, seem to do what they advertise
I expect quality and that's what I get
Quality
Quality of facilities, wildlife, nature, crowding level
Overall appearance, staff, upkeep
Happy with what we see and do
Providing a welcoming atmosphere

Nonspecific, neutral inclination

No specific reason
We have no complaints about Midland City Parks

The parks are just fine to me
It's the average of all the categories
Quality of other characteristics in general
Not familiar with them all, always room to improve
They seem to be well, I haven't been in a while
Appearance of site

Room for improvement

They are nice parks if you have time to use them
Good variety
Seem to be nice parks, too crowded
Some parks busy, some bathrooms ok clean when used
Kept very well and usually accessible without crowding
Always striving to improve
Maybe could be better

Can always use dedicated, caring workers
Safety, there isn't much security
Sense of safety and security
Security

Other

Nice location
Helpful
Friendly
Usually a park employee is around
Close to home, work

Very good rating

(35 of the 40 people who rated the overall management as very good provided a reason for their decision)

Facility management, safety, quality

The parks are very well maintained (5 mentions)
Parks are generally clean
Parks are clean and every well run-quite nice
Cleanliness (12 mentions)
I feel safe on the trail and in the parks (10 mentions)
Beauty (3 mentions)
Security (2 mentions)
Accessibility
Helpfulness
Nice staff
Range of offerings, quality of maintenance
Quality of facilities and staff
Quality, scenic
Quality of facility

Other

Offer so many things for people to enjoy
Everyone is nice whenever we've been there
Management listens to all, explores options, improves park
If it is clean and safe, they're doing a great job
What I have heard and read
I think tax dollars are being managed well
If users take care of parks, they would be nice
Abundance of wildlife, trees-clean facilities, parks
Sanford has a nice beach and great food
Rail to trail very well managed
Areas and trail well groomed-good condition
Too much freedom of personal watercraft
Take precautions when you go to park to have fun

Appendix F

Open-ended Responses

New Development and Facility Ideas

What types of developments/facilities would you support Midland County Parks building and maintaining? (Survey question 15)

(267 of 379 respondents provided a response when asked what types of developments/facilities they would support. Among these respondents, 25 did not support further development, were neutral on the subject, or were supportive of future development but could not provide their own ideas)

**Note: responses with two or more independent items were separated and placed in appropriate categories*

Maintain as is

Maintain existing land for conservation. Further development is unnecessary
Please properly maintain what we have!
I think the parks and facilities available to residents are wonderful and adequate
Believes undeveloped parkland should stay undeveloped

Hunting

Open hunting lands for upland birds and small game
Bow hunt

Camping

Midland County desperately needs a campground where family camping, fishing, and hiking are possible
Family and youth campground
Need campgrounds or other overnight facilities for longer use
Camping and recreation
More camping facilities
Group camping, party/reunion facilities would be nice for Midland County for large gathering
Campsites for tents only, firepits
Low-impact camping

Swimming

Supervised beach and play areas
Swimming areas
Swimming pools
Outdoor pool facilities
New beach access

Boating access

Low cost boat launches for trailer boats
More places for boat access to Sanford Lake
Canoe liveries on rivers/streams for private use
Need more boat launches and cut the COST
A place to camp and go boating together in a clean lake not like Sanford Lake

Fishing

Ramps (docks) built out into lakes, rivers for fishing
More places to fish without boat
Fishing docks and piers into Sanford Lake including handicap access
Fishing piers
Fish stocking in Sanford Lake
Access for stream fishing with non-motorized boats

Fix the Pere-Marquette Trail

Smooth the Pere trail where streets cross the trail
Don't use glass in paved trails-causes flats for bikes!
More bathrooms and drinking water along rail trail

Motorized trails

Snowmobile trail that starts in Midland County and hooks up with another trail system
Motorized trails (ORVs, snowmobiles, etc)
Multi-purpose motorized trails (snowmobile and ORV trail)
ATV user lands

Non-motorized trail use

More jogging trails in wooded areas
Walking paved trails
More areas of hiking, no motorized vehicles so there's less trash
Hiking
Snowshoe

Horse trails

Horse trails with occasional shelters
More unpaved non-motorized trails for HORSES
Horse riding trails

Tennis courts

Tennis courts

We need tennis courts that are free for playing
Would like two tennis courts in Sanford area

Ice rinks

Additional ice rink
New ice rink
Outdoor ice skating facility like Coleman. No hockey or figure skating clubs

Bathrooms

Good clean modern bath facilities not portajons!
Bathrooms along rail trail
Bathrooms at some locations
Add restrooms
Information, restroom areas

Handicap accessibility

Handicap friendly
Handicap accessible sites
Handicap accessible trails developed

Natural resource education

Only those which are compatible with nature and preservation of environment and wildlife
More environmental education for public-pollution control, control of exotic species, and recycle
Need naturalist station at Pine Haven, develop park as Bay City has with Tobacco Marsh
Staff educational Nature Facility
Nature camps for kids, seniors, and handicap folks

Play areas/activities for children

Teen center ages 16-20
Supervised young people, teen activities areas
They need something for teens
A children's zoo
Parks areas for young kids less than five years safe from parking lots and rollerbladers
Upgrade playground equipment, upgrade play surface
More playgrounds
Playgrounds-Plymouth Park too crowded
Indoor playscape or "fun zone". Michigan weather requires indoor large motor and outdoor
Toddler park Toddler Park like Trune Park

Nonspecific

Wild animals

Emerson Park's hockey rink is over crowded

We camp outside Midland County

You are asking for many lawsuits with skateboard ramp

Neutral because don't use any of the parks

More recreational activities

I own an ORV and can't afford to haul to Gladwin County to ride and 65 years old

Anything that my family and others could enjoy and feel safe at all times while there

Support all things for public as whole but 80 years old and use more senior centers

Other

Water fountains accessible within park areas

Observatories, maple syrup festival

More sand volleyball courts for men, women, coed leagues

Developing underdeveloped parks within the city

Add to the Dow Gardens

A way to close parks after hours is near resident areas (especially Plymouth Park)

Addition on to the disc golf course

We would like to see more affordable golf courses. Currie is over crowded

Remove weeds from swim area in Sanford Park

Access to emergency phone use, First-Aid station

Lit outdoor basketball courts for night play

Dining areas along the Rail Trail

Beverage station

Archery range

Waste containers, dog waste bags on trail