



Winnebago County Community Park 2017 Survey Results

501 E County Road Y, Oshkosh, WI

**Economic Parks Impact Study
Phase II**

September, 2017



Winnebago County



*Survey created by the
Winnebago County Parks and
Recreation Department and
ECWRPC*

Background and Foreword

To encourage public involvement in Community Park, the County worked with the East Central Wisconsin Planning Commission (ECWRPC), and created this online public opinion survey. The survey was available May – September 2017. The purpose was to gather information about the usage of the park and the amount of visitors. An economic component was factored in to see how the park impacts the area. This report analyzes how Community Park provides value to the County and the surrounding area.

In total, 305 started the survey with 131 (43%) individuals who responded to questions through to the end of the survey. Seventy-One percent (71%) of those who took the survey live in Oshkosh with the remainder from the surrounding area, Omro, Menasha, Neenah, and Winneconne.

The survey reflects a diverse group demographically with different age groups, family size, and interests. To provide analysis, responses were filtered and cross tabbed to give a representation of visitors to the county park.

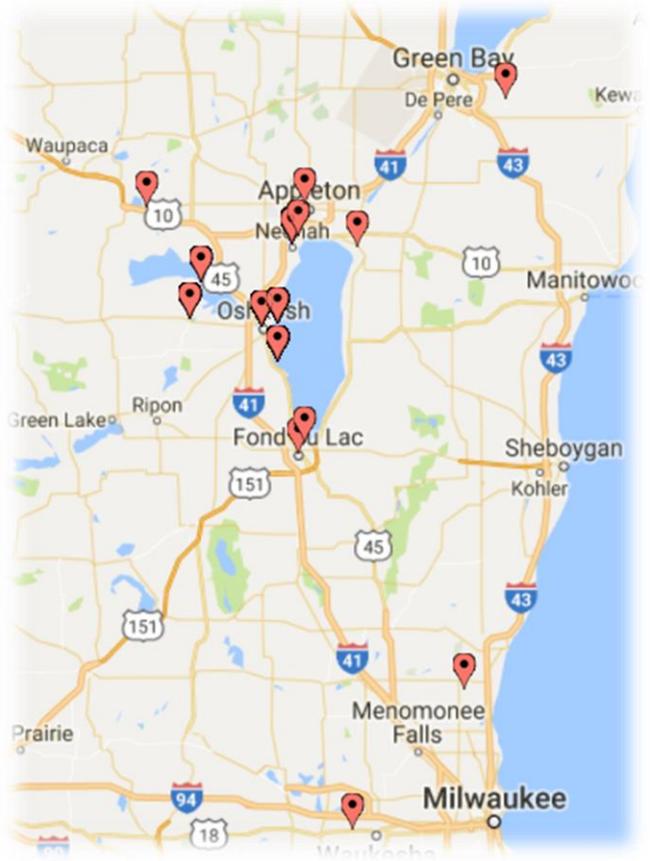
The report is divided into four parts: DEMOGRAPHICS, USER FREQUENCY, AMENITIES, and ECONOMIC FOCUS / IMPACT. It reflects the common ideals sent forth from the public on usage statistics and for improvements. A Best Practices and a Quantifiable Benefits section are also included within this report for future guidance. A full summary of all questions can be found here:

<https://www.getfeedback.com/s/t7DQC7lb>

Demographics

Survey Participant Distribution:

Most respondents were located within Oshkosh (186) 83% and (9) from the surrounding areas like Neenah, Menasha, Omro, and Winneconne, with visitors as far as Waukesha to use the facilities. These were grouped by zip code and 92% were local to the area within driving distance.

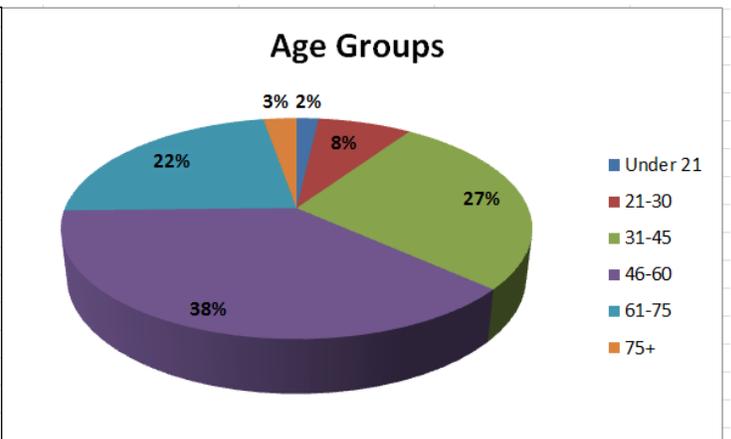
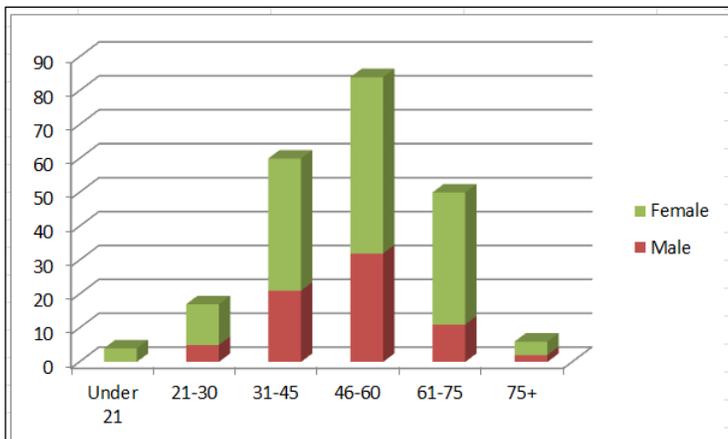


If you are visiting from another place, where are you staying?



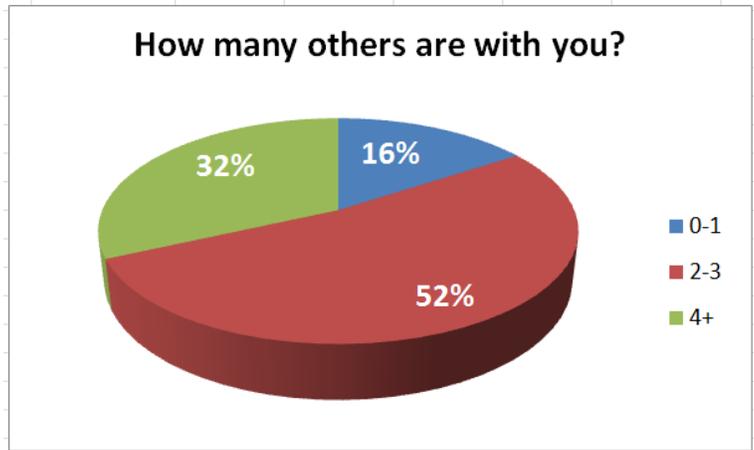
Age / Gender

The **46-60** age group was the largest of the survey takers at 38% with 70% being **female** versus 30% being male. This is reflective of families with small children utilizing the park.

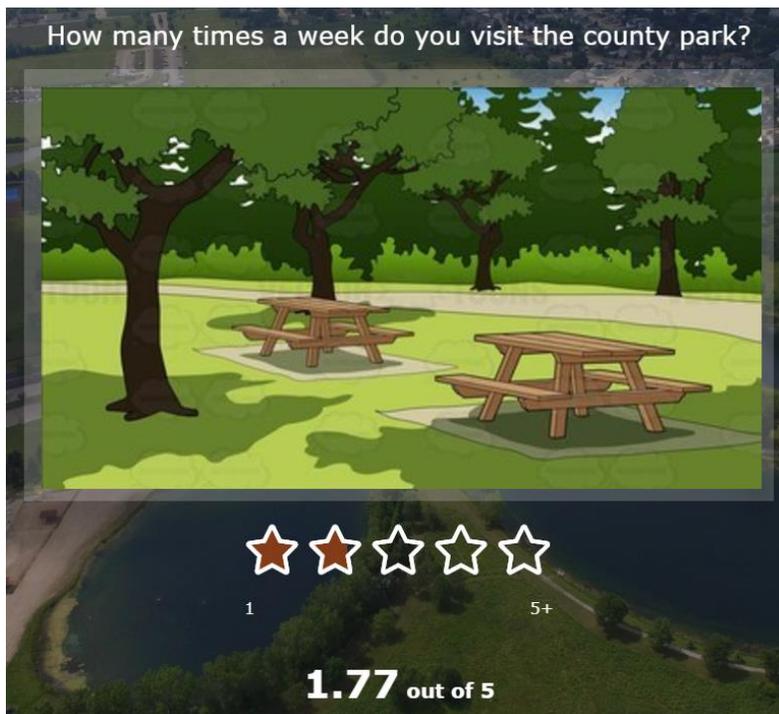


User Amount and Frequency

The amount of use a park gets is directly related to the right facilities and the type of facilities available. Community Park is a popular destination for families but also for couples and singles of all ages. The variety of activities offered shows that the park is very well suited for the diversity of the community.



For the question of how many times a week users visited the park, participants responded with a little more than 1 day a week during the summer months. This pattern of use is seasonal based with a decline in the winter months because of the cold weather.



Amenities

Survey takers were asked to select what activities brought them to the park. The results showed **trails** to be very important at 38%. The breakdown of the top five are as follows:

1. Trails = 38%
2. Dog Park = 34%
3. Picnic Area = 31%
4. Event / Party = 30%
5. Playground = 15%

When looking at the favorite part of the park, trails were also rated high along with nature areas, the dog park, pond, and picnic areas. These complement each other with the most popular activity vs. favorite part of Community Park. For example, walking and biking brought the person to the park and the favorite part was the trails.

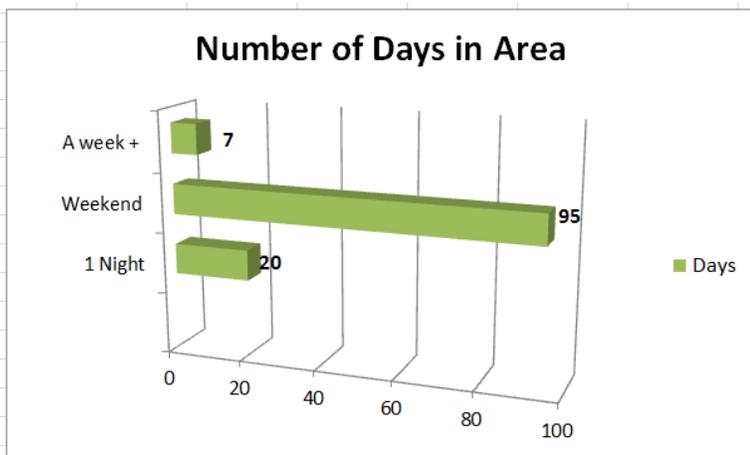
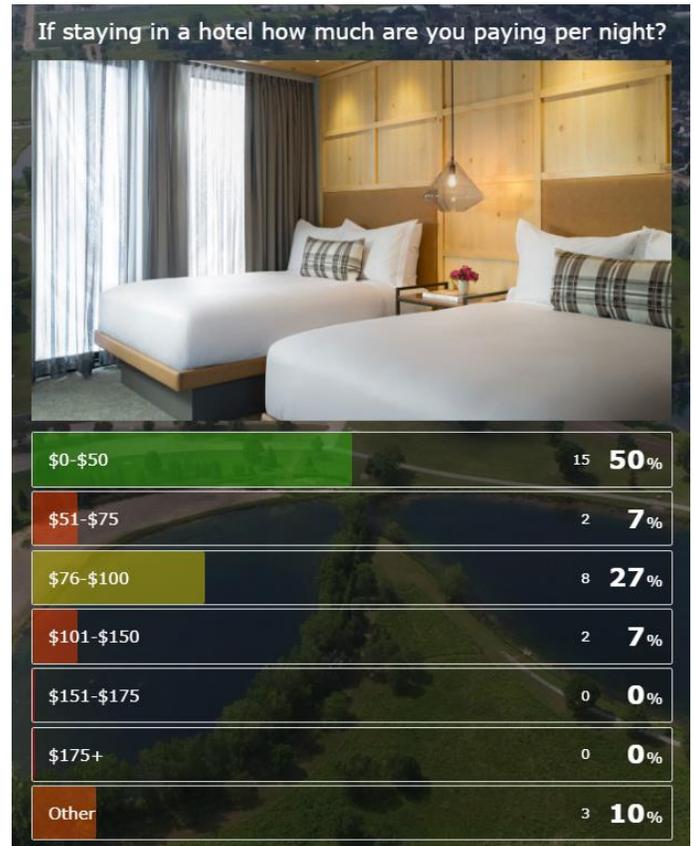


.Respondents stated that this was their first visit and they would return, 49%. Many visitors were repeat users of the park and have had many visits. 48%

ECONOMIC FOCUS

Participants were asked about cost per night if they stayed in a hotel room, **77% answered between \$50-\$100 a night**. Most visitors stayed for a weekend. So if you look at how many weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day, that's an average of 3 days/2 nights, with 15 weekends throughout the summer months.

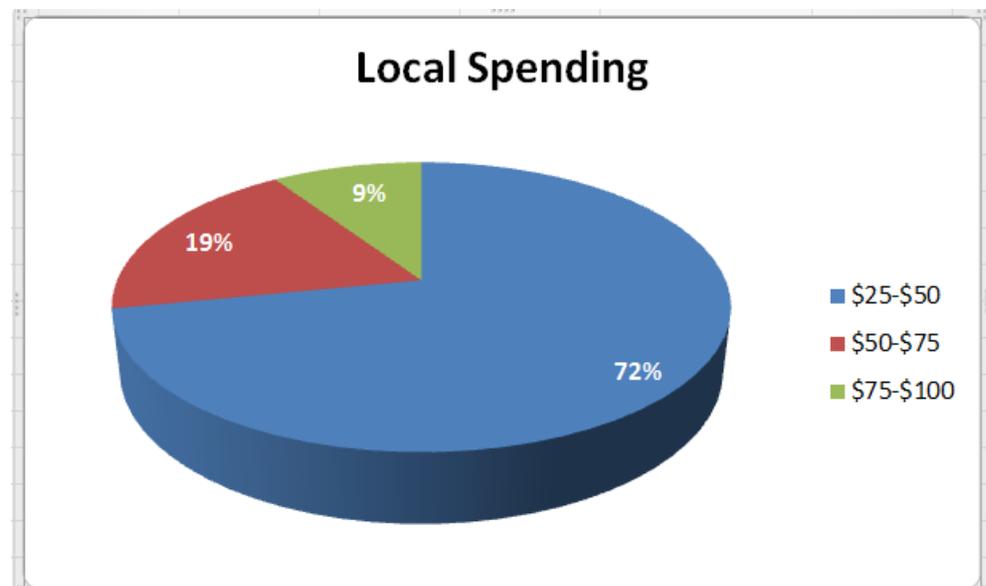
This gives a range of money spent totalling **\$1500 - \$3000** put into the hospitality area. If they were visiting from another area, 37% of participants were also eating at restaurants and spending on average \$25-\$50 per day for dining expenses giving a range of **\$1125 - \$2250 per weekend over the summer**.



Impact

So what does this tell us about Community Park? There is some economic value that is being brought to the area depending on events, trends, and interests. This is shown through the visitor's impact at restaurants and hotel stays. Whether they were local or out of town, participants are dining at local establishments. Approximately 77% of all survey takers are spending money in the area.

From the analysis, we can hypothesize, 72% of Community Park visitors spend between \$25-\$50 a day with another 28% spending higher amounts.



Common Comments for Improvement

- More shade trees
- More picnic shelters
- Open up Swim Area again
- Park Benches along the trails
- Dog Park cleanliness needs some work
- Improve Parking for Soccer Fields

Best Practices

Parks come in all shapes and sizes. They can be strictly recreational, used to protect environmental and natural areas, or can simply be passive spaces. They can be located in urban or suburban areas and can be linear greenways, small pocket parks or large community parks. Whatever their constitution, today's parks need to be versatile and multi-use.

Successful parks usually have five elements associated with them. They are engaging, adaptable, authentic, connected and iconic. They should be designed to provide comfort, convenience and enjoyment, fostering social interactions and physical connectivity. And, that design should create an engaging space that attracts people every day and most hours of the day and should be adaptable to support a variety of programming.

Winnebago County's Community Park offers these engaging experiences with a plethora of activities and opportunities. From the pathways, dog park, athletic fields, disc golf course, archery range, new fitness area, natural zones and picnic areas, there are plenty of options for everyone. Given these increasing demands, how can we manage Community Park in a way that meets the public's expectations?

One idea is to leverage best practices to run the park more soundly. Ultimately, contemporary leadership techniques allow us to deliver better park services to the people served.

Three things to consider:

1. Commit to performance management – Follow your mission and provide objectives and strategic direction. Staff needs to be engaged in creating the best park experience possible.
2. Create a culture of innovation – Foster creative thinking for improving the overall quality and produce “excellence” in accountability.
3. Develop a measurement system - Measuring information like your park user fees, maintenance costs per acreage and concession revenues allows you to predict future costs and financial performance. And knowing this information enables you to be viewed as a credible entity who has full control of your operations and whose budget requests and plans are worthy of consideration. In addition, sharing this information on your website for community members to see further shows accountability and transparency, two important qualities found important today. What am I getting for my tax dollars?

Quantifiable Benefits

While the intangible benefits of parks are wonderful for people's quality of life, there are quantifiable economic benefits in the return on investment and a county's tax base that urban planners and designers are seeing. As CityLab noted in its "[Why We Pay More for Walkable Neighborhoods](#)," if your home is located within a walkable area and near a park, the value will likely go up by \$81.54 per square foot. According to Americans for the Arts' "Arts & Economic Prosperity III" report, parks that incorporate local heritage and artists attract more tourists, and residents feel a strong connection to that place. So, for every dollar invested, there is generally a \$7 return on the investment. This is why we are seeing communities around the county invest in their amenity infrastructure, which, in turn, spurs private investment.

Amenity infrastructure is so critical that it helps potentially undesirable areas transform into hubs of activity and redevelopment. In many cases, the creation of any type of park space on a vacant or under-utilized parcel can lead to new residential, mixed-use or retail area around these parks, all of which increase the quality of life for residents and visitors to that community.

As cities compete to attract new businesses and residents, parks increasingly have been utilized by business and marketing strategists for towns and cities. Businesses are attracted to amenities and activities often found in the public realm. These businesses realize that many of the professionals they wish to employ are looking for communities that have well-managed and maintained parks and public spaces.

How do communities justify the use and investment in parks, public spaces and the associated programming? They use quantitative elements, such as increased tourism, increased resident and visitor spending, the increase in property values adjacent to parks and public spaces, the increase in jobs to meet tourism demands and the increase in occupancy rates around these parks and public spaces.

So for Community Park, be different, be unique, and attract your visitors with confidence. Provide those trend based activities in variety! A wonderful asset to Winnebago County!