

## DETROIT AREA STUDY, 2001: Parks and Recreation

*By Robert W. Marans, University of Michigan*

### Summary

Parks and recreation facilities are often considered indicators of a community's quality, as they typically contribute to the health and well-being of community residents. Based on data from the 2001 Detroit Area Study, this report examines park usage and the views of southeast Michigan residents regarding the parks and public recreation facilities available to them in their communities and across the region. Key findings from this study include the following:

- The presence of nearby parkland available to southeast Michigan residents varies greatly, depending on where those residents live in the metro Detroit region. For instance, the percentage of respondents having a park within one-half mile of their homes ranges from a high of 64 percent in the city of Detroit to a low of only 4.5 percent in Livingston County.
- The amount of parkland in terms of acres available to residents appears to have no significant bearing on how often people visit parks. On the other hand, proximity to parks does appear to influence park use, with shorter distances from homes to parks associated with more frequent park visits.
- Views about recreational opportunities differ across the region. Overall, 44 percent of area respondents feel that metro Detroit has lots of recreational opportunities. The percentage of respondents feeling the opposite – that recreational opportunities are too limited – ranges from 18 percent to 24 percent in most of southeast Michigan, except in the city of Detroit where it spikes to 34 percent.
- Eighty-five percent of the survey respondents visited a park at least one time during the previous year.
- While most respondents across southeast Michigan express overall satisfaction with local parks (78 percent satisfied) as well as with recreational facilities (54 percent) and places for young children to play (54 percent), respondents in the city of Detroit express overall dissatisfaction on all three of these measures.
- Approximately 39 percent of metro area respondents are willing to pay more in taxes to acquire land for parks and recreational facilities, while 29 percent are unwilling to pay more, and 32 percent are undecided. Although there are not major differences in these percentages across the region's counties, respondents in Washtenaw County and the city of Detroit are the most willing to pay more in taxes, with 44 percent and 46 percent willing to increase their taxes, respectively.

These and other findings are discussed in more detail on the following pages.



## Overview

This report is one in a series covering findings from the 2001 Detroit Area Study (DAS) on the Quality of Community Life conducted and funded by the University of Michigan. DAS 2001 is a survey of over 4,300 adults in metro Detroit and addresses their perceptions, expectations, satisfactions, and behaviors associated with community living. Throughout this report, metro Detroit is defined as the seven counties in the southeast Michigan region. These counties are Livingston, Macomb, Monroe, Oakland, St. Clair, Washtenaw and Wayne. The city of Detroit is part of Wayne County. The series of reports covers topics including: attitudes about the region and Detroit; travel and transportation; public services, taxes, and local government; community and community involvement; housing; neighborhoods and neighboring; regional growth, development, and the environment; moving intentions; and prospects for the future of the region. These and other reports are available online at <http://sitemaker.umich.edu/das2001/>. Although the reports are based on data collected several years ago, they identify important differences across the region and provide a valuable basis for tracking changes into the future.

This report examines the uses and assessments of parks and recreational facilities in southeast Michigan, including local parks as well as the Huron-Clinton Metropark system, a regional park district authorized by the Michigan Legislature in 1939 which encompasses the counties of Wayne, Oakland, Macomb, Washtenaw, and Livingston. Funded by a property tax levy and user fees, the system now includes 13 parks covering almost 24,000 acres serving about 9.5 million visitors annually. (See <http://www.metroparks.com> for more on the Metroparks system.)

Parks and recreational facilities can improve the quality of life in a community, and can help attract the type of talented workforce required to establish a new high-skill based economy in Michigan. However, parkland acquisition and maintenance of recreational facilities can cost significant sums of money, and not all communities in the region will have sufficient public support for such expenses, given the fiscal constraints facing many of Michigan's local governments today.

## Methodology

Conducted in the spring and summer of 2001, the DAS survey consisted of two parts. Initially, face-to-face interviews were conducted with a probability sample of 315 adult respondents (18 years of age and older) living in the tri-county area of Wayne, Oakland, and Macomb Counties. Subsequently, a questionnaire was mailed to a sample of adults throughout the seven counties; 4,077 were returned. Response rates were 59.8 percent for the face-to-face sample and 56.7 percent for the mail sample. A summary of respondent characteristics is available on the study Web site listed above.

As part of the mail survey, respondents had the opportunity to write additional thoughts about the quality of life in their community or in the metro Detroit region, and more information about those responses is also available in the reports on the DAS 2001 Web site.

DAS 2001 also compiled contextual information about the minor civil di-

visions (MCDs) or communities and environments associated with each respondent. This information includes housing and demographic characteristics, land use characteristics, growth rates, employment, school information, and other characteristics of the communities where respondents live.

Findings presented in this and other reports show responses from the entire metro Detroit area and then from each of the seven counties. Because of its importance to the region and the number of respondents from the city of Detroit, findings for the city are presented separately, while findings for other parts of Wayne County are reported as "Wayne-Other."

## Findings

### AVAILABILITY OF RECREATION RESOURCES

When discussing the availability of recreation resources, two indicators or measures are typically considered. One is the *amount* of parkland and the other is *accessibility* or distance from homes to parks. In order to calculate the amount of nearby parkland in acres and the distance between respondents' homes and their nearest parks, respondents' home locations were geocoded and compared to parkland maps provided by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments. These measures are presented below for survey respondents together with opinions about the adequacy of local and regional recreational opportunities.

#### About the Author

Robert W. Marans is Research Professor at the University of Michigan Institute for Social Research, and Professor Emeritus of Architecture and Urban Planning at the University of Michigan. Professor Marans, who is trained as a planner and an architect, has compiled an extensive body of research, backed up with equally extensive community involvement, on issues of the built and natural environments, neighborhood quality, recreation behavior and parks, and retirement housing.



**Table 1. Availability of Recreation Resources, by County**

Availability of Parks	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
<b>A. Amount of Parkland</b>									
Acres of parkland within 1/4 mile	2.6	0.5	1.7	0.4	1.8	0.5	4.1	3.3	3.9
Acres of parkland within 1/2 mile	13.2	5.1	9.5	1.0	8.9	3.6	16.5	19.8	17.4
<b>B. Access to Parks</b>									
Percent of households having park within 1/4 mile	24	4.5	15	4	16	7	34	33	34
Percent of households having park within 1/2 mile	24	4.5	15	7	33	22	56	63	64
<b>C. Mean Distance in Miles to Parks</b>									
Nearest park	1.1	2.6	1.2	2.5	1.3	2.6	0.9	0.8	0.6
Nearest Metropark	12.3	8.4	8.7	17.3	11.4	21.9	7.7	11.0	17.9

Data calculated by comparing geocoded respondent locations against park sizes and locations as provided by the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

**AMOUNT OF PARKLAND**

The amount of nearby parkland available to respondents varies greatly throughout metro Detroit. When considering immediate surroundings, respondents in Washtenaw and Wayne Counties and in the city of Detroit have significantly more parkland available to them than do residents in other parts of the region, as shown in Table 1. Respondents in Detroit, as well as Washtenaw and Wayne Counties have between 3.3 and 4.1 acres of parkland within a quarter mile area around their homes, while respondents in Oakland and Macomb Counties, for example, have less than half as much (about 1.8 acres). Those living in the outlying counties of Livingston, Monroe and St. Clair have the least amount of nearby parkland, averaging about a half-acre within the quarter mile range of their homes.

The pattern across the region changes in some ways when a larger neighborhood area is considered, that is, the amount of parkland within a half mile of respondents' homes. Again, respondents in Washtenaw and Wayne Counties and in the city of Detroit have the most parkland within a half mile (between 16.5 and 19.8 acres) while Monroe County respondents have the least (one acre). Although Livingston County respondents have on average about 5 acres of open space nearby, a significant amount of that land is in state parks.

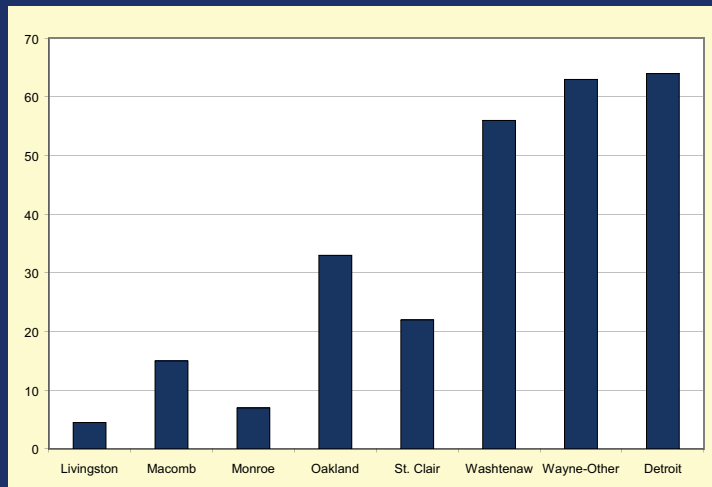
**DISTANCE TO PARKS**

One way to measure the accessibility of parks is to examine the proportion of people having a park within a specified distance of their residences. Approximately 34 percent of respondents in the city of Detroit, as well as in Washtenaw and Wayne Counties have a park within a quarter mile of their homes, while the same is true for only 7 percent of those in St. Clair County, only 4.5 percent in Livingston County, and just 4 percent in Monroe County. These proportions increase in all counties except Livingston and Macomb, when the larger half-mile neighborhood radius is considered. The increase is most dramatic in St. Clair County where 22 percent of respondents live within a half-mile of a park. The

percentage of households within each county having parkland within a half-mile is graphed in Figure 1.

Another way to gauge accessibility is to measure the average distance people have to travel to reach a park. Table 1 shows that the survey respondents on average live about 1.1 miles away from their nearest parks. The average distance from home to the nearest Metropark (in the Huron-Clinton Metroparks system) when considering all respondents is 12.3 miles. This average distance, however, masks a large range across the region: those living closest to a Metropark are Washtenaw County respondents (approximately 7.7 miles on average), while those living furthest from a Metropark

**Figure 1. Percent of Households Having Parks Within 1/2 Mile**



Figures represent the percentages of respondent households located within a half-mile of a park.



**Table 2. Perceptions of Recreation Opportunities in Metro Detroit, by County**

Metro Detroit has lots of recreational opportunities	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
Strongly agree	7	5	7	3	9	2	4	5	8
Agree	37	39	39	24	41	28	36	40	28
Neither agree nor disagree	32	34	33	50	28	52	36	31	30
Disagree	17	17	14	14	15	14	16	17	24
Strongly disagree	7	5	7	9	7	4	8	7	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Agree-disagree Ratio	1.8	2.0	2.2	1.2	2.3	1.7	1.7	1.9	1.1

Reported statistics are the percentages of respondents who responded in each category. The agree-disagree ratio shows the percentage of respondents who answered “strongly agree” or “agree” divided by the percentage who answered “strongly disagree” or “disagree.”

are St. Clair respondents (with an average distance of about 22 miles).

### PERCEPTIONS OF AVAILABLE RECREATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

In response to the statement, “The metro Detroit area has lots of recreational opportunities for me and my family,” respondents who agree outnumber those who disagree by almost 2 to 1 (44 percent versus 24 percent, as shown in Table 2). About one-third either have no opinion or give a neutral response. Respondents in Detroit are the most likely to feel recreational opportunities are limited, despite the fact that they have lots of nearby parkland, compared to others in the region.

As seen in the bottom row of Table 2, the ratio of respondents agreeing that

metro Detroit has lots of recreational opportunities compared to those disagreeing shows that Oakland County respondents have the most favorable opinions about the region’s recreational opportunities. The “agree-disagree ratio” of 2.3 for Oakland County means that for each respondent who disagrees with the statement, there are 2.3 others who agree with the statement. The ratio of 1.1 for the city of Detroit shows that respondents there are about evenly divided on this issue.

It should be noted that about half of the Monroe and St. Clair County respondents express no opinion about recreational opportunities in metro Detroit. In large part, the typical respondent in these counties does not know about the wider region’s parks and other rec-

reational opportunities and many don’t consider themselves as living in metro Detroit.

### PARK VISITS

Respondents were asked two questions about park use. One addressed their visits to Metroparks during the previous year and the other asked about the frequency of visits to other parks in their community or county. Reported visits to county and local parks occur more frequently than visits to the region’s 13 Metroparks. As seen in Panel A of Table 3, about 36 percent of metro area respondents visited a Metropark 3 times or more during the previous year. A higher proportion (45 percent) report at least three visits to local or county parks (shown in Panel B).

**Table 3. Annual Visits to Metroparks and Local/County Parks, by County**

Park Use	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
<b>A. Annual Visits to Metroparks</b>									
Never	29	21	20	44	30	51	28	30	30
1 or 2 times	35	35	32	31	34	37	33	35	41
3-6 times	21	25	24	14	22	9	23	19	19
More than 6 times	15	19	24	11	14	3	16	16	10
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>B. Annual Visits to Local and County Parks</b>									
Never	25	28	26	24	26	24	17	23	30
1 or 2 times	30	27	30	28	28	34	23	29	34
3-6 times	21	26	22	19	20	23	23	20	20
More than 6 times	24	19	22	29	26	19	37	28	16
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>C. Park User Classification</b>									
Non-visitors	15	12	12	21	16	19	10	14	17
Frequent visitors	24	30	30	18	25	9	30	23	18

Reported statistics are the percentages of respondents who responded in each category.



## METROPARKS

Frequent Metropark users are most likely to live in Macomb and Livingston Counties whereas respondents of Monroe and St. Clair Counties are least likely to be Metropark users. In fact, more than half of St. Clair County respondents never visited a Metropark in the previous year. Although there are Metroparks near the borders of these two outlying counties (Lake Erie Metropark and Metro Beach Metropark), neither Monroe nor St. Clair County is part of the Metropark system.

The relatively low usage among Detroit respondents is attributable in part to the absence of Metroparks in the city. In addition, the Metroparks in Wayne County are relatively far from most Detroit respondents (about 18 miles on average).

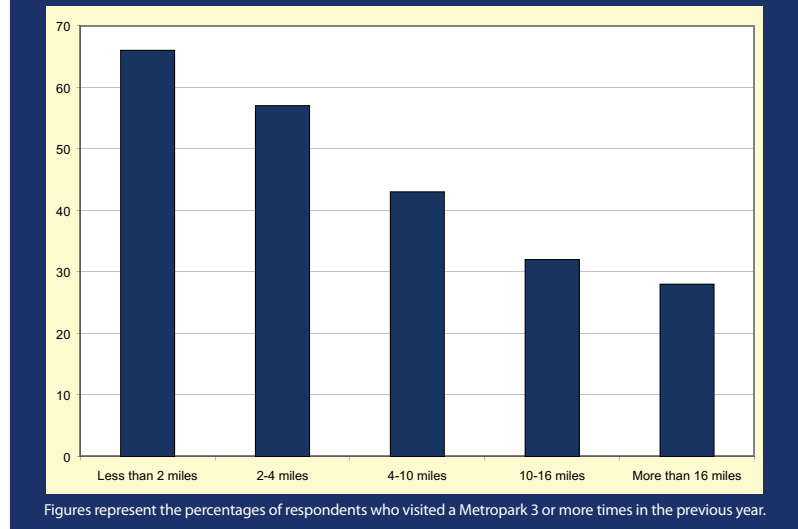
## LOCAL AND COUNTY PARKS

The frequency of visits to local and county parks also varies for respondents living in different parts of the region. For instance, about 60 percent of Washtenaw County respondents visited a local or county park 3 or more times in the previous year, compared to only 36 percent of respondents from the city of Detroit.

## OVERALL PARK USE

In order to determine the extent of overall park use among respondents, a composite measure combining reported visits to Metroparks and to other parks was created. Although there is a tendency for visitors to Metroparks to also visit other types of parks and visa versa, the relationship between the two is not perfect. For example, there are respondents who visited one type of park often while never visiting the other types. And of course there are also the two extremes: those who never visited any kind of park, and those who visit numerous parks very often. The latter are defined as those making 6 or more annual visits to both Metroparks and to local parks. Panel C of Table 3 shows the distribution of

Figure 2. Three or More Annual Metropark Visits, by Distance to Nearest Metropark



respondents in these these two extreme categories within each county.

Overall, only one in every seven respondents (15 percent) did not visit a park of any kind in the metro area during the previous year. These non-users of parks are most prevalent in Monroe County, St. Clair County and the city of Detroit. Frequent park users were most likely to live in Livingston, Macomb, and Washtenaw Counties.

## CHARACTERISTICS OF PARK VISITORS

There is a higher frequency of annual visits to Metroparks among respondents with children at home (3.4 annual visits on average) than for those without children in the household (2.7 annual visits). Compared to others, frequent Metropark visitors also have household incomes over \$20,000 (3.2 visits versus 2.4 visits for those with incomes below \$20,000) and are more likely to be white as opposed to African American (3.1 visits versus 2.5 visits on average, respectively).

Whereas the average number of annual Metropark visits increases slightly for those with incomes over \$75,000, visits to local and county parks increase dramatically as income levels rise. Re-

spondents reporting household incomes over \$125,000 visit local and county parks twice as often on average compared to respondents with incomes of less than \$20,000 (4.6 annual visits versus 2.4 annual visits, respectively). Unfortunately this study did not collect data to explain why these differences exist, although the transportation requirements to visit a Metropark, as well as vehicle entrance fees may have a larger negative impact on those with less disposable income. Future research is encouraged to examine this issue in more detail.

## PARK USE AND THE AVAILABILITY OF PARK RESOURCES

Self-reported park visits appear to be unrelated to the *amount* of nearby parkland in the respondents' communities. When the number of park visits was examined for respondents with different amounts of land devoted to parks in their communities, no relationships were found.

On the other hand, *accessibility* (or distance) to parks is associated with reported park visits. Figure 2 shows a strong relationship between how far people live from a Metropark and the number of reported visits during the previous year. For



**Table 4. Places Where Young Children Play, by County**

Places Where Young Children Play	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
Own yard	96	95	98	99	94	100	97	98	94
Neighbors yard	69	71	77	70	74	68	60	64	54
Local park	62	46	60	13	64	63	71	79	41
School yard	52	54	54	48	51	59	54	58	42
Sidewalk/street	46	29	52	40	41	30	35	52	54
Open field/vacant lot	15	21	11	34	18	11	11	9	22
Elsewhere	9	11	6	12	7	4	8	6	17

Reported statistics are the percentages of respondents with children 5-12 years old reporting places they play.

example, about 66 percent of respondents living within 2 miles of a Metropark said they made at least 3 visits in the previous year, while only 43 percent of those living between 4 and 10 miles from a Metropark reported 3 or more such visits. Although not shown in Figure 2, the same basic relationship holds true regarding use of local parks: of those living within a quarter mile of a park, 52 percent report visiting parks at least 3 times in the previous year, compared to only 40 percent of those who live more than 2 miles from their nearest park.

**WHERE CHILDREN PLAY**

For households with young children, parks and other opportunities for play are important considerations in their assessment of the places they live. Before exploring the issue of how people evaluate local parks and recreation facilities for children, the question of where young children play is examined.

When asked to indicate the places where their children between 5 and 12 years of age play, virtually everyone mentions their “own yard” while a little more than two-thirds indicate they played in the

“neighbors yard” (multiple responses were allowed). Table 4 shows the proportion of respondents in each county whose young children play in different types of places. The table shows that nearly two-thirds (62 percent) of parents with young children report their children play in a local park. Children in Livingston and Monroe Counties and in the city of Detroit (where there is a preponderance of single family homes) are least likely to use local parks, whereas Wayne County children (other than in Detroit) are the most likely park users (79 percent). Overall, play at nearby

**Table 5. Evaluation of Local Parks and Recreation, by County**

Evaluation	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
<b>A. Ratings of Local Parks</b>									
Very good	36	40	37	25	43	42	46	42	10
Fairly good	42	42	48	48	45	37	39	44	26
Neither good nor bad	13	14	10	22	9	15	13	9	26
Not very good	6	2	4	4	3	4	2	4	21
Not good at all	3	2	1	1	0	2	0	1	17
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>B. Satisfaction with Local Recreation Facilities</b>									
(7) Completely satisfied	10	15	10	5	12	5	11	13	5
(6) Mostly satisfied	21	31	20	18	26	16	36	23	5
(5) Somewhat satisfied	23	20	28	22	26	27	25	27	9
(4) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	22	21	26	25	24	27	16	18	20
(3) Somewhat dissatisfied	10	8	9	19	6	12	7	11	17
(2) Mostly dissatisfied	6	3	5	8	4	7	3	4	15
(1) Completely dissatisfied	8	2	2	3	2	6	2	4	29
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
<b>C. Satisfaction with Places Young Children Play</b>									
(7) Completely satisfied	12	16	11	9	12	9	13	16	4
(6) Mostly satisfied	20	29	19	17	25	23	28	21	6
(5) Somewhat satisfied	22	22	25	24	25	18	24	24	13
(4) Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	20	20	25	24	22	21	21	18	16
(3) Somewhat dissatisfied	11	6	11	11	8	16	8	12	18
(2) Mostly dissatisfied	7	4	6	9	6	8	4	5	14
(1) Completely dissatisfied	8	3	3	6	2	5	2	4	29
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Reported statistics are the percentages of respondents who responded in each category.



schools is even less prevalent than at local parks, although this trend is reversed in Livingston and Monroe Counties. For the region as a whole, about half of all respondents with children aged 5 - 12 years say their children play at the local school yard.

### EVALUATION OF LOCAL PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES

Three questions were asked to determine how residents of southeast Michigan evaluate recreational opportunities available to them in their communities. These questions cover each respondent's ratings of local parks and nearby recreation facilities, as well as satisfaction scores for places where children play. The findings show that while most respondents are satisfied with parks and recreational opportunities, respondents in Detroit express more dissatisfaction than others in the region.

Table 5 shows the responses by county for these three questions. Panel A in Table 5 shows 78 percent of respondents overall expressing satisfaction (ratings of "very good" or "fairly good") with local parks, although only 36 percent of Detroit respondents answer this way. Looking from the other end of the spectrum, very small percentages of respondents (from 2 to 6 percent) express dissatisfaction (ratings of "not very good" or "not good at all") with their local parks, except in the city of Detroit where fully 38 percent of respondents give poor ratings.

This same pattern - general satisfaction across the region, except in the city of Detroit - holds true when residents are asked about their views of recreational facilities and of places for children to play.

Regarding local recreational facilities, Panel B in Table 5 shows overall satisfaction (ratings of 5 - 7) across the region at 54 percent, while only 19 percent of Detroit respondents express satisfaction. And while levels of dissatisfaction (ratings of 1 - 3) in most counties range from only

12 to 30 percent of respondents, 61 percent of Detroit respondents say they are unhappy with the state of their local recreational facilities (including 29 percent who express "complete dissatisfaction").

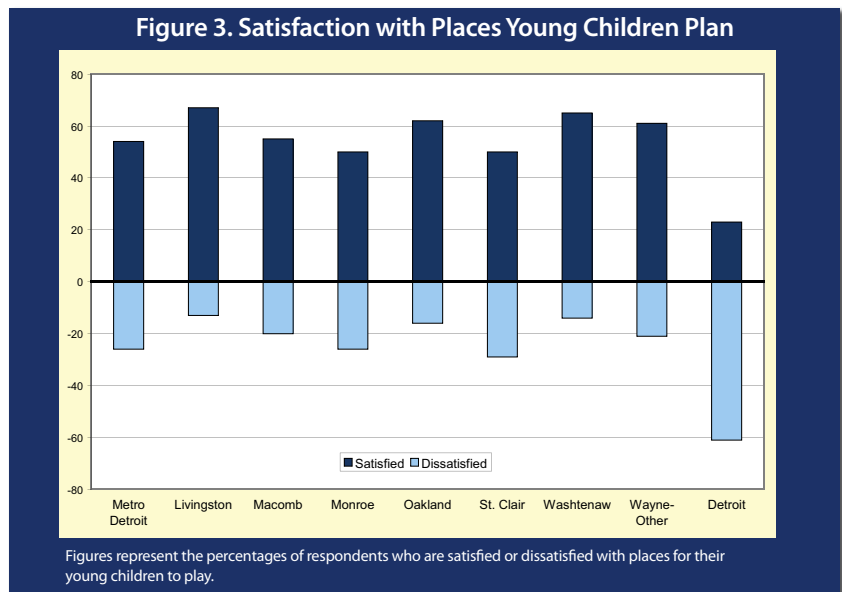
Panel C in Table 5 also shows 54 percent overall satisfaction regarding places young children play, but only 23 percent satisfaction from respondents in the city of Detroit. And compared to the levels of dissatisfaction which range from 13 to 27 percent of respondents across most of the counties in the region, 61 percent of Detroit respondents express dissatisfaction with places young children play. Figure 3 illustrates these levels of satisfaction and dissatisfaction from across southeast Michigan.

Although they have relatively large amounts of accessible parkland compared to most other residents in the region, it is clear that residents of Detroit are significantly less satisfied with their recreation resources. Although this study cannot answer precisely why Detroiters are less satisfied than others in the region, possible explanations might include deteriorating park quality due to significant cuts in the Detroit city parks budget, concerns about safety in the parks, or other similar

reasons. Future research is encouraged to better understand exactly what leads to these significantly lower levels of satisfaction for Detroiters.

### WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR PARKS AND RECREATION

Residents of southeast Michigan express a range of views about paying for land acquisition for new parks and recreational facilities. While about 4 in 10 agree with the statement, "I would be willing to pay more in taxes if the money goes to acquiring land for parks and recreational facilities," about 3 in 10 disagree (see Table 6). As seen in the "agree-disagree" ratios in Table 6, those most likely to support a tax increase are respondents in Detroit as well as those in Washtenaw and Monroe Counties. Interestingly, pluralities of respondents from every county in the region express willingness to pay more in taxes for these recreation-related resources, as shown in the "agree-disagree ratios" greater than 1.0 in Table 6. Oakland County respondents are the most divided on this question, with 37 percent in support of higher taxes, and 33 percent opposed.



**Table 6. Willingness to Pay for Parks and Recreation, by County**

Willingness to Pay More in Taxes	Metro Detroit	Livingston	Macomb	Monroe	Oakland	St. Clair	Washtenaw	Wayne-Other	Detroit
Strongly agree	8	6	7	3	9	9	12	7	12
Agree	31	32	29	34	28	30	32	30	34
Neither agree nor disagree	32	32	36	39	30	29	28	32	30
Disagree	20	18	20	16	24	23	19	21	16
Strongly disagree	9	12	8	8	9	9	9	10	8
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Agree-disagree ratio	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.5	1.1	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.9

Reported statistics are the percentages of respondents who responded in each category. The agree-disagree ratio shows the percentage of respondents who answered “strongly agree” or “agree” divided by the percentage who answered “strongly disagree” or “disagree.”

## Summary

This report has presented findings about recreation resources available in southeast Michigan, as well as residents’ use of and opinions about those resources. Among the key findings are the following:

1. The amount of nearby parkland in acres available to metro Detroit residents varies greatly depending on where they live in the region.
2. The amount of parkland in terms of nearby acres available to residents appears to have no significant bearing on how often people visit parks. Proximity to parks, however, does appear to influence park use, with shorter distances from homes to parks associated with more frequent park visits.
3. Views about recreational opportunities in southeast Michigan vary. About 44 percent of respondents feel there are lots of recreational opportunities in the metro Detroit region, while 24 percent feel the opposite.
4. Approximately 85 percent of southeast Michigan respondents visited a park at least once during the previous year. The most frequent visitors were respondents in Livingston, Macomb and Washtenaw Counties.
5. Most respondents in the region, except those in the city of Detroit, express overall satisfaction with local parks, recreational facilities and places for young children to play.

6. Although willingness to pay more in taxes for parkland acquisition and recreational facilities varies across the region, there is more support than opposition to this question in all counties of southeast Michigan.

## Conclusion

As the state of Michigan struggles to revive its declining economy, some analysts argue that attracting or retaining young, entrepreneurial, well-educated residents is a key strategy to economic growth and development. Quality of life, including access to parkland and recreational opportunities, these analysts argue, is an important factor in attracting young professionals to move into or stay in the area.

This report presents evidence of a population that makes use of available parks and expresses general satisfaction with those parks and recreational opportunities. With 39 percent of respondents willing to pay more in taxes for additional park acquisitions, and only 29 percent opposed, there may be additional opportunities for policymakers to further enhance the park systems and the quality of life for residents of southeast Michigan. And given the findings that park use is associated with proximity to parks, more so than the size of parks, local policymakers may be able to realize important community benefits with creation of additional small parks located close to population centers.

### Regents of the University of Michigan

Julia Donovan Darlow, Ann Arbor; Laurence B. Deitch, Bingham Farms; Olivia P. Maynard, Goodrich; Rebecca McGowan, Ann Arbor; Andrea Fischer Newman, Ann Arbor; Andrew C. Richner, Grosse Pointe Park; S. Martin Taylor, Grosse Pointe Farms; Katherine E. White, Ann Arbor; Mary Sue Coleman (ex officio)

Prepared by Robert W. Marans, and Thomas Ivacko

## Contact Information

### Center for Local, State, and Urban Policy

Gerald R. Ford School of Public Policy  
University of Michigan  
Joan and Sanford Weill Hall, Suite 5310  
735 South State Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-3091  
734-647-4091 (phone)  
734-615-5389 (fax)  
<http://closup.umich.edu>  
[closup@umich.edu](mailto:closup@umich.edu)

**Paul N. Courant, Director**  
**Thomas Ivacko, Administrator**  
**Stephanie James, Sr. Administrative Asst.**

### 2001 Detroit Area Study

**Robert W. Marans, Principal Investigator**  
Univ. of Michigan, Institute for Social Research  
426 Thompson Street  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106  
734-763-9818  
[marans@umich.edu](mailto:marans@umich.edu)

