

## Chapter IV

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

### INTRODUCTION

For any planning process, it is good practice to provide opportunities for the public to become acquainted with the planning process and to solicit public involvement in the development of plan recommendations. In the case of a park and open space plan, it is beneficial to gather information related to public perceptions of outdoor recreation, the County park system, and protection of natural resources and open space lands. To ensure community involvement, the public participation efforts carried out during the process of preparing a park and open space plan for Ozaukee County included, but were not limited to, review and input by the Land Preservation Board (a Citizen Advisory Committee), a countywide public opinion survey, onsite park user surveys, a series of public visioning sessions, and three strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analyses. The comments and suggestions obtained were used to help guide the development of the goals, objectives, and plan recommendations contained in the County park and open space plan. A summary of these efforts is presented in this chapter.

Appendix C outlines the specific methods of public participation used in this plan. The methods of public participation are organized by purpose of public involvement (public awareness, public education, public input, public interaction, and public partnership), the level of public involvement associated with each method, and the cost associated with each method. Public involvement levels have been assigned based on a booklet compiled by the University of Wisconsin Extension, Jefferson County Office.<sup>1</sup> The timeline for the various public input opportunities is also included in Appendix C.

### PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The primary means of obtaining public input was a statistically significant, mail-out countywide survey. In fall 2010, a countywide public opinion survey was conducted on behalf of the County by the University of Wisconsin-River Falls Survey Research Center. The survey was designed with the assistance of the Ozaukee County Land Preservation Board, the Ozaukee County Comprehensive Planning Board, UW-Extension, Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department, and SEWRPC. The survey was viewed as an important means of broadening citizen input in the preparation of the new County park and open space plan.

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<sup>1</sup>Grabow, Steve H., *Comprehensive Planning and Citizen Participation, University of Wisconsin Extension, Jefferson County, 2002.*

The survey was designed to include a range of questions on park and open space topics such as quality of life, park and open space preservation, park development and facilities, park and open space plan funding, natural and cultural resource protection, and basic demographics. Approximately 1,146 surveys were mailed to a random sample of adult residents in Ozaukee County. The sample was stratified by community in an effort to obtain a representative cross-section of County viewpoints. The results provided in this report are expected to be accurate to within plus or minus 4.75 percent with 95 percent confidence. Statistical tests did not indicate that “non-response bias” is a problem in this sample. A report detailing the full results of the survey is included in Appendix D.

Of the 1,146 surveys mailed, 422 (37 percent) were completed and returned. Overall, the survey results indicated strong support for:

- Preserving farmland, maintaining open space, protecting important environmental resources, and preserving wildlife habitat, especially near County parks;
- Maintaining existing park facilities;
- Maintaining and expanding County-wide trails;
- River restoration projects; and
- Preserving historic sites.

In addition, support was expressed for:

- Expanding the County park system;
- Creating a County program to purchase conservation easements for natural areas, with private donations, conservancy trust funds, and State/Federal funds as the preferred funding sources;
- Purchasing conservation easements for farmland preservation, with conservancy trust funds and State/Federal funds as the preferred funding source; and
- Funding park, open space, and farmland preservation projects without raising property taxes.

## **PARK USER SURVEY**

Onsite park user surveys were conducted by the Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department from June 28, 2010 through August 15, 2010. Park users were surveyed at Covered Bridge Park, Ehlers County Park, Hawthorne Hills Golf Course, Lion’s Den Gorge Nature Preserve, Mee-Kwon Golf Course, Tendick Nature Park, Virmond Park, and Waubedonia Park. The survey was viewed as an important means of obtaining input from the public using County parks and for reaching those who may not be inclined to participate in public meetings and events or be an eligible adult on the countywide public opinion survey.

The survey included questions on parks visited, frequency of park use, park satisfaction, and respondent’s age and gender, and solicited suggestions for park improvements or additions. A total of 376 surveys were collected. The park user survey and key survey results are included in Appendix E. The major findings of the survey are described below.

- Hawthorne Hills Golf Course, Mee-Kwon Golf Course, and Tendick Nature Park are the most popular County parks based on frequency of visits.
- About 90 percent of all visitors surveyed indicate that they are satisfied (36 percent) or extremely satisfied (54 percent) with the park visited.
- Survey respondents over 65 years of age were most common at Hawthorne Hills Golf Course (46 percent) and Mee-Kwon Golf Course (52 percent).

- Survey respondents less than 25 years of age were most common at Tendick Nature Park (44 percent)—likely attributable, in part, to their use of the park's disc golf course.
- A majority of those surveyed (66 percent) were male (similar to the countywide public opinion survey).
- The most common suggestions for improvements at County parks included: improve restrooms and drinking water facilities; add a driving range at Hawthorne Hills Golf Course; add more trash cans at Lion's Den Gorge Nature Preserve; add disc golf holes at Tendick Nature Park; and provide beach access and more trails at Virmond Park.

## **PUBLIC VISIONING SESSIONS**

As another means of broadening citizen involvement in the preparation of the new County park and open space plan, the Ozaukee County Planning and Parks Department and UW-Extension held three public visioning sessions at the beginning of the planning process. The visioning sessions were held at: Mee-Kwon Golf Course in the City of Mequon on April 19, 2010; Hawthorne Hills Golf Course in the Town of Saukville on April 26, 2010; and the Ozaukee County Administrative Center in the City of Port Washington on April 27, 2010. The purpose of the visioning sessions was to provide an overview on park and open space planning, provide background information on existing County parks and park facilities, and to solicit public input relative to current and potential County parks and natural areas, the Ozaukee Interurban Trail, and other natural resource features in the County. A summary of comments and suggestions from the three visioning sessions is included in Figure 2. As shown in Figure 2, among the most commonly made suggestions were the following:

- Develop a dog park
- Develop a system of water trails and canoe access sites
- Develop and promote cross-country ski trails in County parks
- Develop countywide biking/hiking trails that include links to the Ozaukee Interurban Trail and trails in and between parks
- Continue efforts to preserve and enhance the entire Lion's Den Gorge natural area
- Provide additional facilities for individual and group camping
- Develop mountain bike trails and facilities

## **STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSES**

At meetings of the Ozaukee Interurban Trail Advisory Council (OITAC), the Ozaukee County Land Preservation Board (LPB), and the Ozaukee County Comprehensive Planning Board (CPB), members were invited to take part in a SWOT Analysis workshop, which is a planning tool used to identify a community's current assets and liabilities, as well trends that might have a positive or negative impact on its future. Participants identified and discussed the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that they perceived in Ozaukee County; when appropriate, they were asked to prioritize the issues by identifying those they believed were most important.

The SWOT analyses carried out with the LPB and CPB were intended to be broad in scope, potentially including any topic related to parks, recreation, and open space. The SWOT analysis undertaken with the OITAC focused primarily on issues related to the Ozaukee Interurban Trail. The results of the LPB and CPB SWOT analyses findings are presented in Figure 3, and the results of the OITAC SWOT analysis are presented in Figure 4. The issues identified as top priorities in the County are highlighted in bold in Figures 3 and 4, and are listed below.

Figure 2

**OZAUKEE COUNTY PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN VISIONING SESSIONS – COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

April 19, 2010 Mee-Kwon Golf Course	April 26, 2010 Hawthorne Hills Golf Course	April 27, 2010 Ozaukee County Administrative Center
<p><b>Virmond Park</b> Develop a bike/walk/run loop through the park from Lake Shore Drive Make soccer field improvements</p>	<p><b>Tendick Nature Park</b> Restore the vegetation in the area near the canoe launch, possibly with hay Change name to “Tendick Athletic Park”</p>	<p><b>Lion’s Den Gorge Nature Preserve</b> Pursue strategic/targeted expansion to protect the gorge and surrounding natural areas</p>
<p><b>Ozaukee Interurban Trail</b> Provide additional bathrooms and parking along the Trail Create a trailhead at County Line Road/Trinity Creek</p>	<p>Implement prairie restorations Create a boardwalk and trails southwest of the archery range</p>	<p>Create a trailhead at County Line Road/Trinity Creek</p>
<p><b>Mee-Kwon Park and Golf Course</b> Develop the 24-acre parcel on the south side of the park into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soccer and baseball fields</li> <li>• Trails through the wooded area</li> <li>• A bike trail connection to Chapel Hill Road</li> <li>• A dog park</li> </ul>	<p><b>Waubedonia Park</b> Provide a gravel ramp for the canoe launch Put up a “no parking” sign at the boat ramp Do more plowing in winter to allow year-round use Adjust entrances to allow additional parking in winter when gates are closed</p>	<p><b>Ozaukee Interurban Trail</b> Develop an off-road connection from Port Washington to Newburg Develop connections to parks close to the Trail Permit cross-country skiing alongside the Trail Develop a connection to Lion’s Den Gorge Nature Preserve Clear snow on half the width of the Trail Provide campsites for bikers along the Trail Develop a Trail wayside at the Milwaukee River bridge Provide additional signage on the north side of Port Washington Complete the off-road section of the Trail on the north side of Port Washington</p>
	<p><b>Other Park and Open Space Issues</b> Add the Shady Lane Property to the County park system (maintain in its current state) Develop ATV trails Require dogs to be on leashes at Lion’s Den Gorge Nature Preserve Develop a dog park Create mountain bike trails Provide multiple, year-round, uses at the golf course club houses Promote snowshoeing and cross-country skiing within the parks Provide groomed cross-country ski trails</p>	<p><b>Other Park and Open Space Issues</b> Develop a cross-country ski course Sponsor/host/promote cross-country skiing competitions Create additional campsites/campgrounds (single and group) Provide additional fishing sites Create an ATV park Develop a horseback riding trail Develop water trails for the Milwaukee River, Cedar Creek, and Lake Michigan Establish a County land preservation stewardship fund</p>

Source: Ozaukee County and SEWRPC.

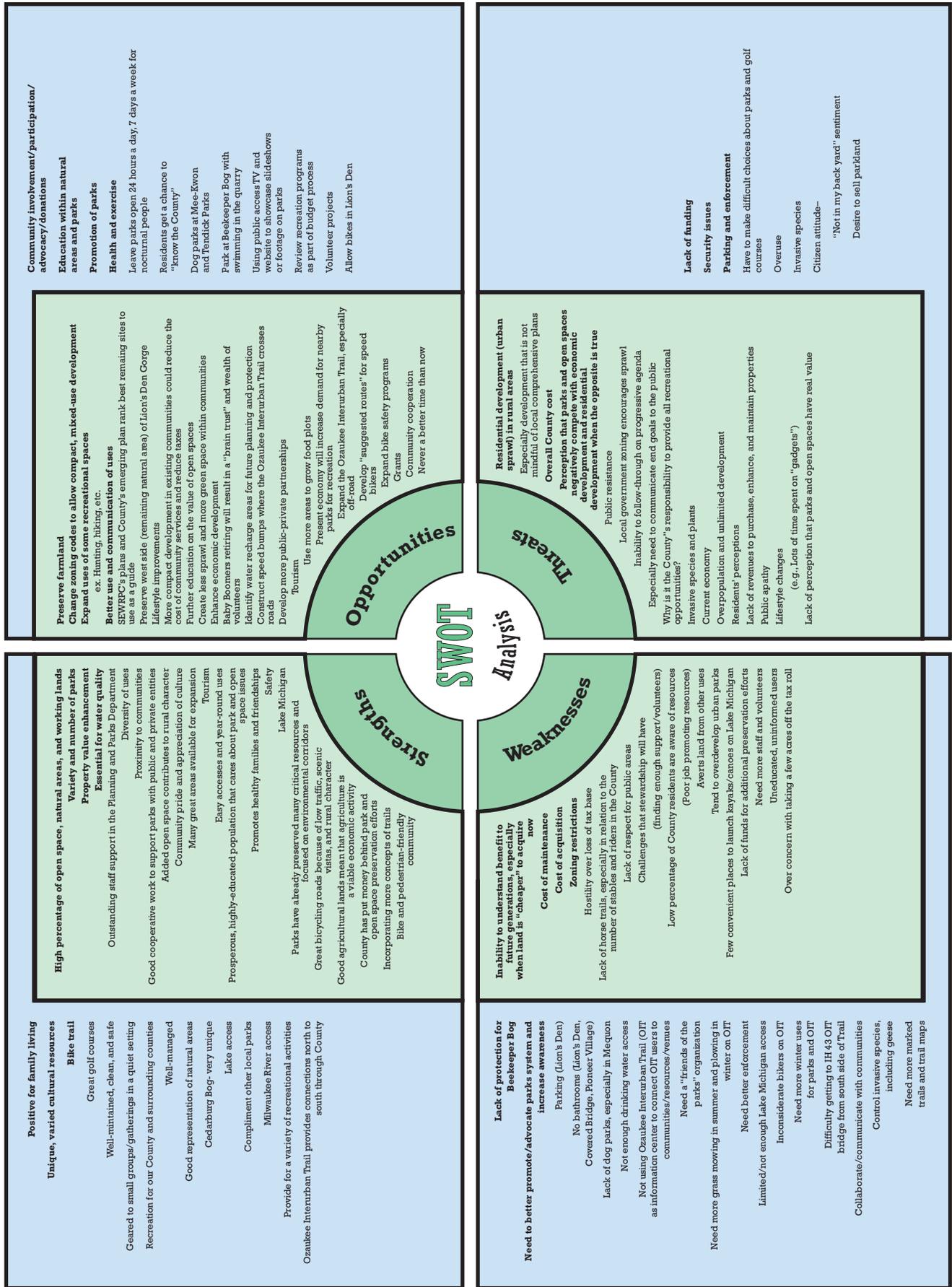
**LPB and CPB SWOT Analyses – Top Priorities**

**Strengths**

- High percentage of open space, natural areas, and working lands
- Variety and number of parks
- Property value enhancement
- Essential for water quality
- Positive for family living
- Unique, varied cultural resources
- Bike trail

Figure 3

**RESULTS OF STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS FOR THE OZAUKEE COUNTY PARK AND OPEN SPACE PLAN**



Source: Ozaukee County and SEWRPC.

SWOT Analysis conducted at an Ozaukee County Land Preservation Board meeting, June 18, 2010.

SWOT Analysis Conducted at an Ozaukee County Comprehensive Planning Board meeting, June 15, 2010. Issues in bold were identified as top priorities in the County.

Figure 4

**RESULTS OF STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS (SWOT) ANALYSIS FOR THE OZAUKEE INTERURBAN TRAIL**



### ***Weaknesses***

- Inability to understand benefit to future generations, especially when land is “cheaper” to acquire now
- Cost of maintenance
- Cost of acquisition
- Zoning restrictions
- Lack of protection for Beekeeper Bog
- Need to better promote/advocate parks system and increase awareness

### ***Opportunities***

- Preserve farmland
- Change zoning codes to allow compact, mixed-use development
- Expand uses of some recreation spaces
- Better use and communication of uses
- Community involvement/participation/advocacy/donations
- Education within natural areas and parks
- Promotion of parks
- Health and exercise

### ***Threats***

- Residential development (urban sprawl) in rural areas
- Overall County costs
- Perception that parks and open spaces negatively compete with economic development and residential development when the opposite is true
- Lack of funding
- Security issues
- Parking and enforcement

### **OITAC SWOT Analysis (related to Ozaukee Interurban Trail issues) – Top Priorities**

#### ***Strengths***

- Provides opportunities to commute to work
- Multi-use
- Well maintained
- Trail can be used all four seasons
- Creates economic opportunities for communities
- IH 43 bridge and Milwaukee River bridge are landmarks for Ozaukee County

### ***Weaknesses***

- Substation in Mequon could be renovated
- Cost to maintain
- Lack of trailheads at beginning and end of Trail
- Lack of restrooms
- Lack of cooperative efforts between communities for maintenance

### ***Opportunities***

- Collaborative budgeting for maintenance with all communities along Trail
- Trail corridor that touches other communities

### ***Threats***

- Diminishing funds and staff time
- Loss of leadership and passionate, knowledgeable volunteers

## **OTHER PUBLIC INPUT**

In addition to the public involvement efforts described above, the County has received other public input throughout the planning process via e-mails, letters, telephone calls, and other contacts. Examples of comments received are included in Appendix F. Furthermore, an Ozaukee County Horse and Rider Survey was conducted in 2011 to obtain input from the horse riding population of Ozaukee County with respect to open space and trail needs for equestrian activities. Results of the survey were not available for inclusion in this plan.

## **SUMMARY**

This chapter has presented the results of the public involvement efforts carried out during the process of preparing a new park and open space plan for Ozaukee County. These efforts included, but were not limited to, review and input by the Land Preservation Board (a Citizen Advisory Committee), a countywide mail-out survey; an onsite park user survey; a series of public visioning sessions; and three strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analyses. The results were used to help guide the development of the goals, objectives, and plan recommendations contained in the County park and open space plan presented in Chapters V and VI of this report.

The aforementioned public involvement efforts provided the opportunity for County residents to express their views regarding a range of park and open space issues and concerns and to offer suggestions for the of the future County park system. A capsule summary of the results of the public participation efforts follows.

1. The statistically significant, mail-out public opinion survey of adult County residents conducted in fall 2010 included a range of questions on park and open space topics. In general, the survey indicated public support for preserving farmland, maintaining open space, protecting important environmental resources, and preserving wildlife habitat; maintaining existing park facilities; maintaining and expanding County-wide trails; river restoration projects; and preserving historic sites. The detailed results of the survey are presented in Appendix D.
2. The onsite survey of park users conducted at eight County parks during the summer of 2010 indicated that Hawthorne Hills Golf Course, Mee-Kwon Golf Course, and Tendick Nature Park are among the most

popular County parks, based upon frequency of visits. Many of the park visitors indicated that they use one or more County parks on a daily or weekly basis. Most park visitors indicated that they are satisfied or extremely satisfied with their typical visit to the park at which they were surveyed (see Appendix E).

3. At three public visioning sessions held in April-May 2010, attendees offered numerous comments and suggestions with respect to future park and recreation development. The most commonly made suggestions included developing a dog park; developing a system of water trails and canoe launch sites; developing and promoting cross-country ski trails in County parks; developing biking/hiking trails, including mountain bike trails, that include links to the Ozaukee Interurban Trail and trails within and between parks; continued efforts to preserve and enhance the entire Lion's Den Gorge natural area; and provision of additional camping facilities. The detailed results of the visioning sessions are set forth in Figure 2, presented earlier in this chapter.
4. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) exercises conducted in May-June 2010 provided the members of Ozaukee County Land Preservation Board, Ozaukee County Comprehensive Planning Board, and Ozaukee Interurban Trail Advisory Council an opportunity to weigh-in on various park, trail, and open space issues at the outset of the County park and open space plan update. Each Board/Council identified a number of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats pertaining to outdoor recreation and open space preservation in the County, for consideration in preparing the new park and open space plan. The results of the SWOT analyses are set forth in Figures 3 and 4 presented earlier in this chapter.

