

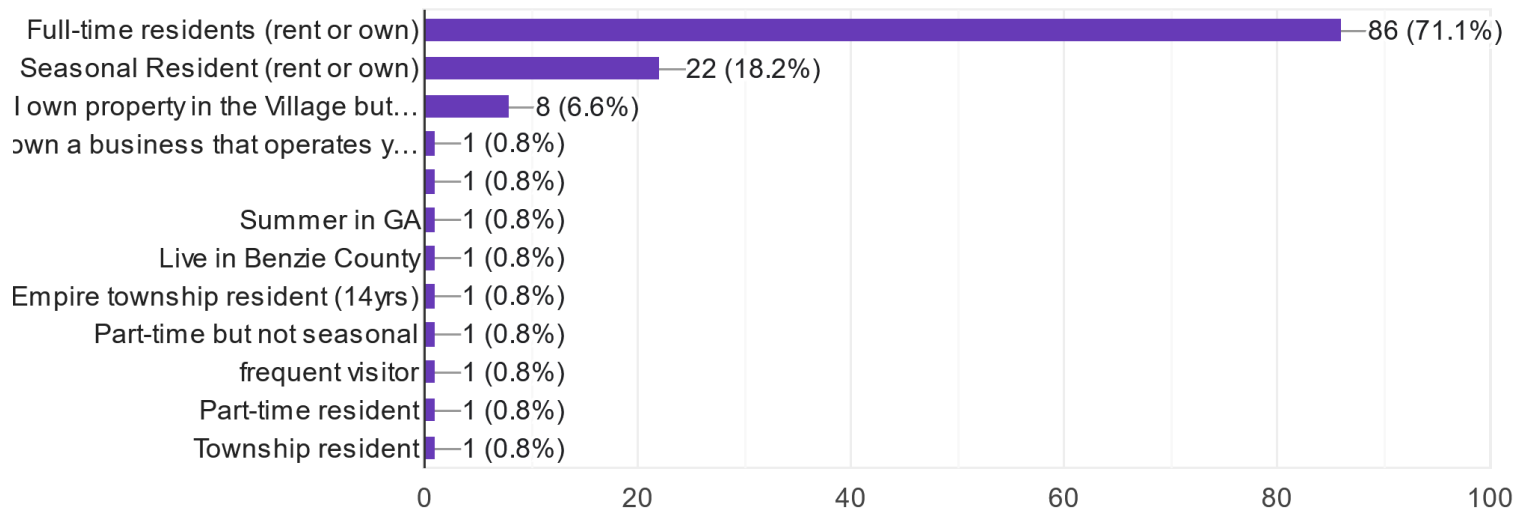
Village of Empire

Planning Commission Recreation Plan Update Questionnaire Responses

A call to complete a Recreation Plan Update Questionnaire was sent out to the email list of persons who had indicated an interest in the Village Master Plan process, the Village email blast list, and was made available at the Village Office and the Glen Lake Library. The survey was sent out on November 19. 121 Respondents.

Which of the following best describes you?

121 responses



Additional Comments

Live full time across boundary of village limits

Often visit

My in-laws live down the road and we visit Empire often

Use Lake Michigan Park

Use Johnsonson Park Pickle ball courts

Homeowner in Village; part-time but not seasonal. Walk the beach year round (from Empire Hills subdivision) & pickle ball

Frequent Vistor visitor

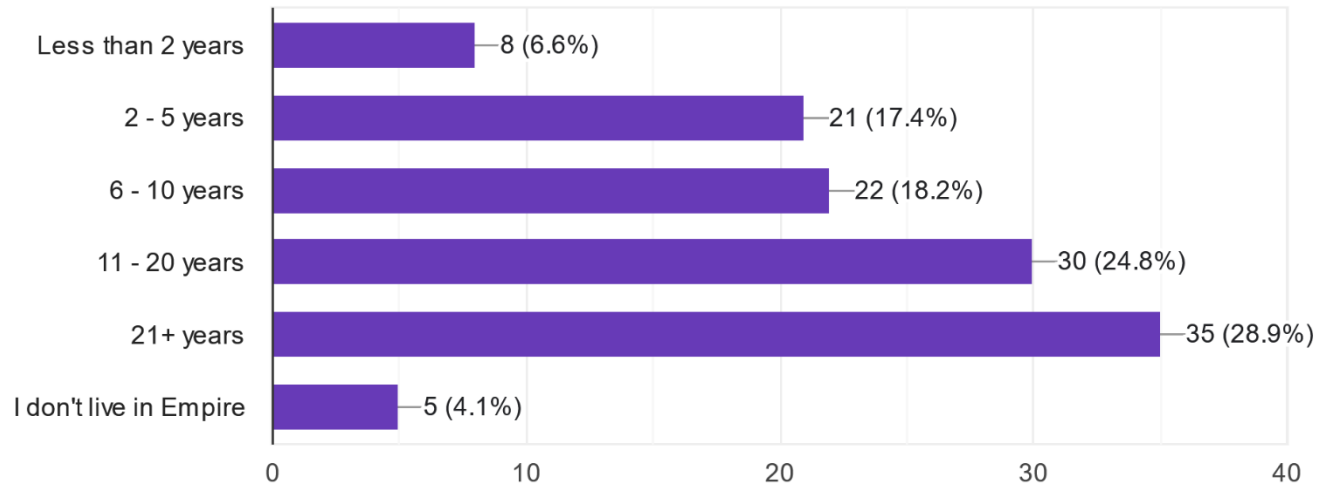
Bounce back and forth - 50% of my week spent at my home in Empire

Son is a student at Glen Lake Schools, we have owned our home here since 2016.

I own the old high school that will be historically restored. Previous master plans denoted it as an activities center/community center. I believe some synergy can occur between myself and the village recreation department

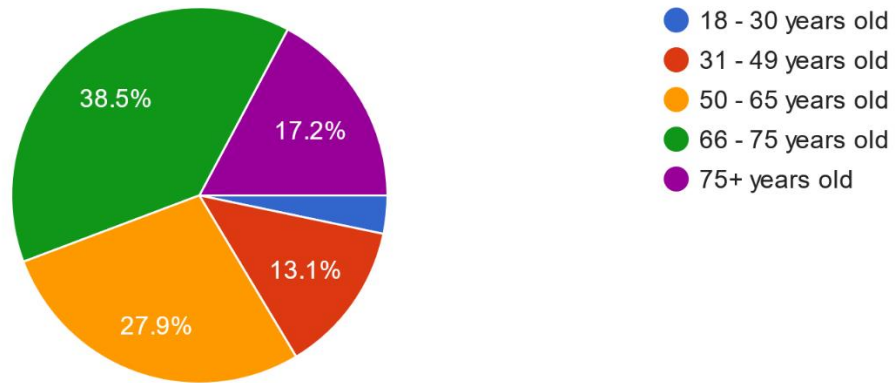
How long have you lived or owned property in the Village?

121 responses

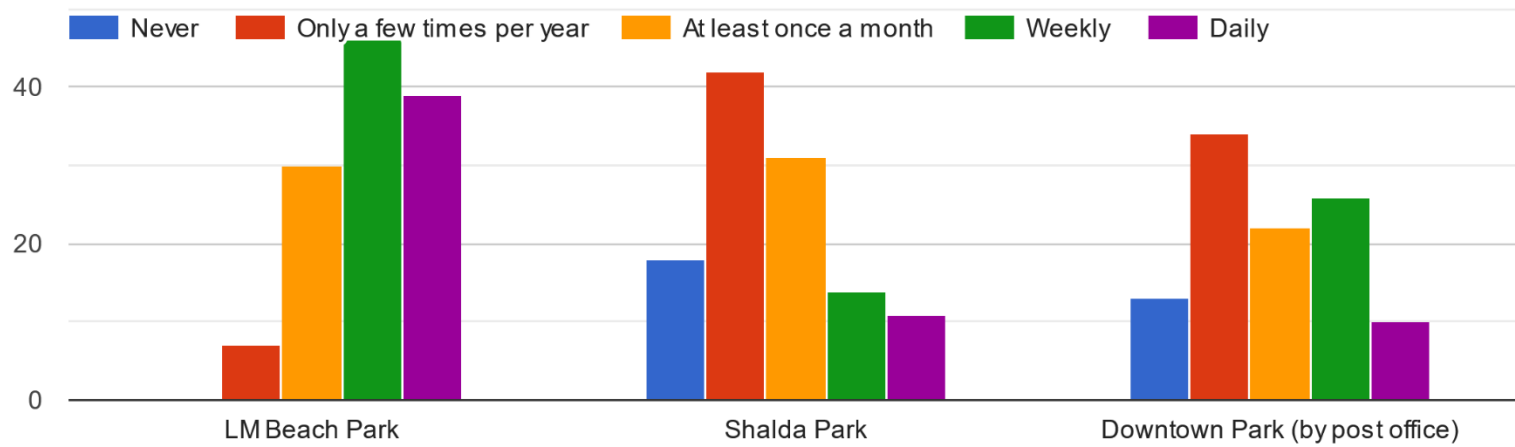


What is the age group of the person filling out this questionnaire?

122 responses

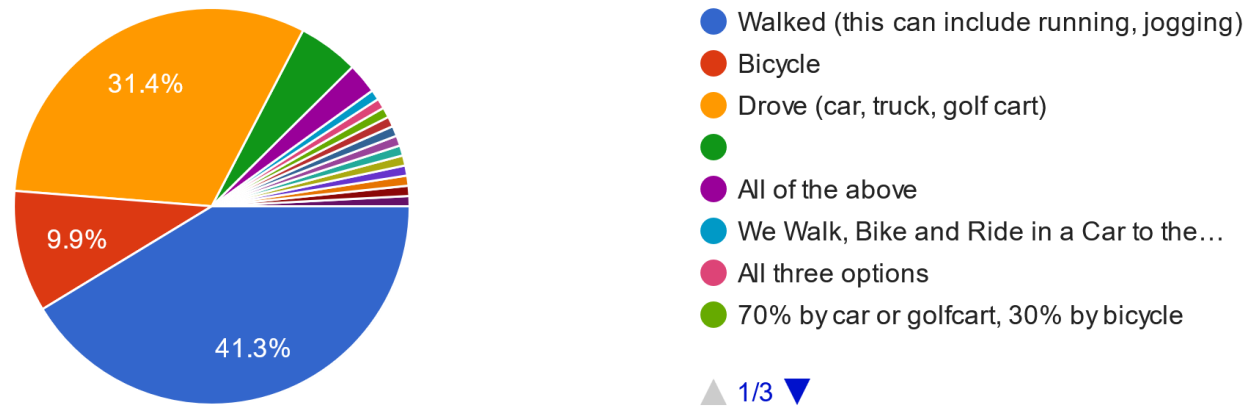


How often do you or members of your family visit a park in the Village?



If you have visited one of the parks in the last year, how do you travel to the park?

121 responses

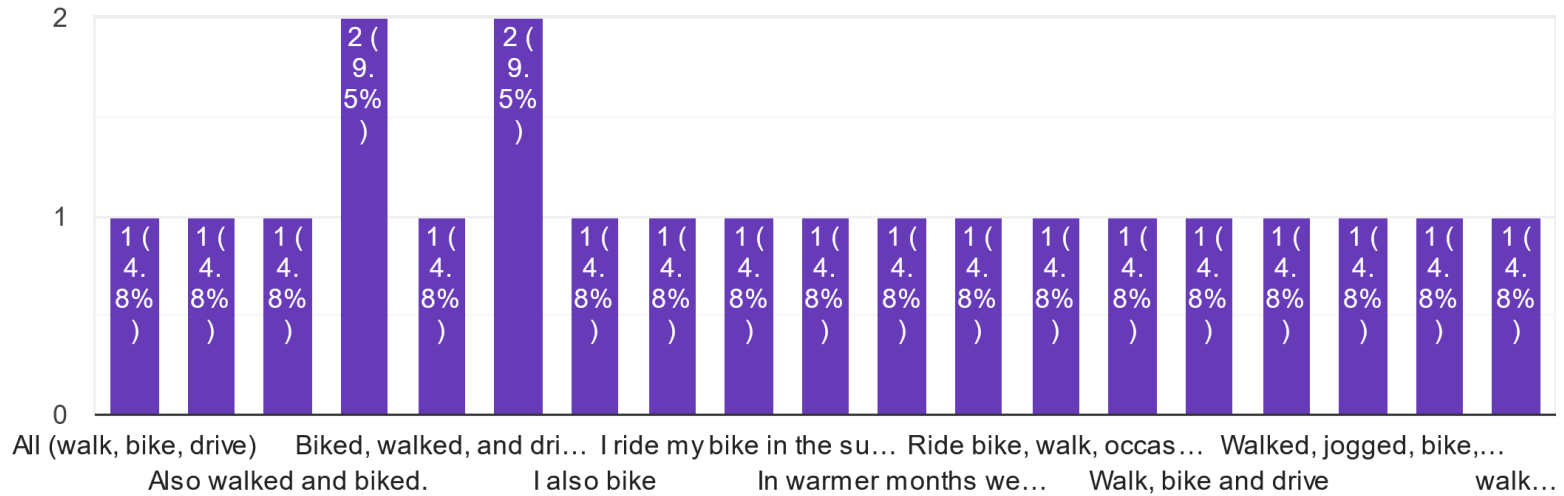


(The 2nd question related to travel was ill-advised as it provided no useful additional data). Chart is below.

Biking and Walking seemed to be the prevalent transportation mode.

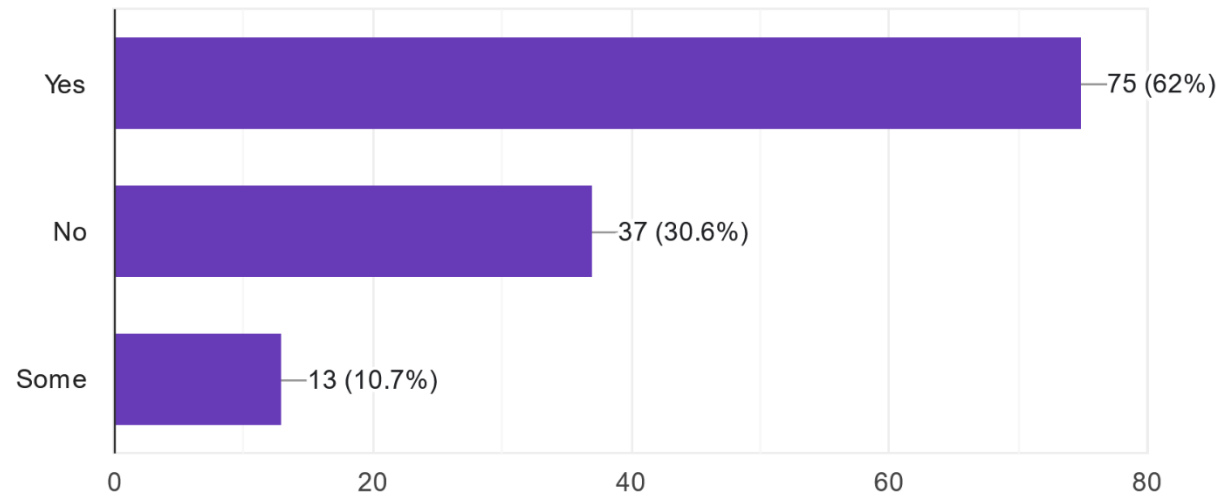
If you selected other, please specify.

21 responses



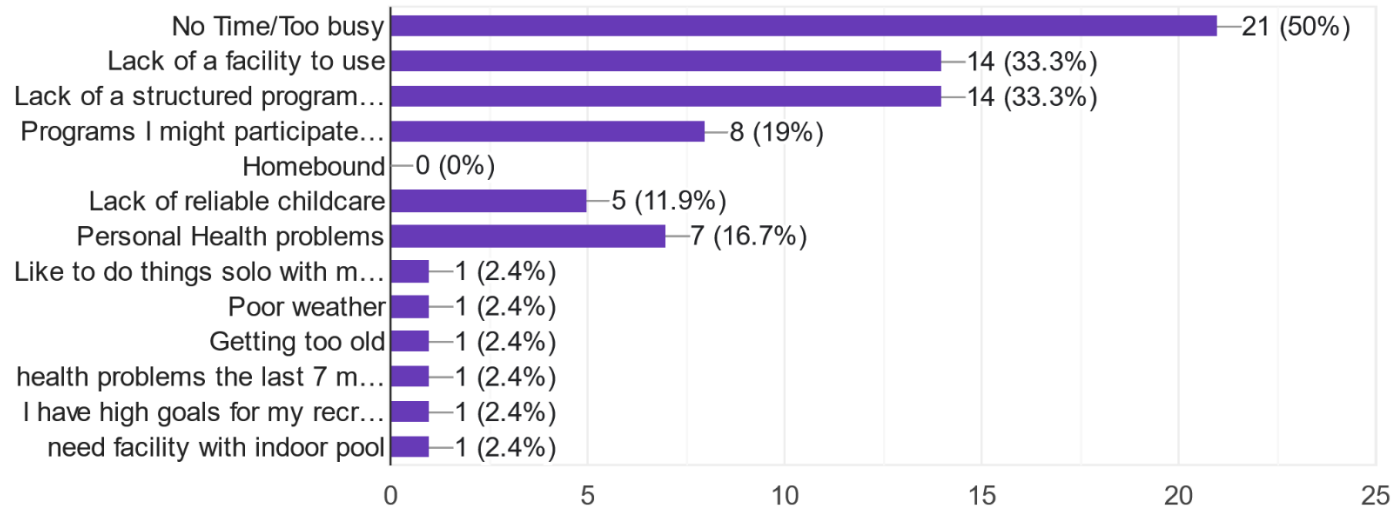
Do you participate in recreation activities (e.g., sports, physical fitness wellness, outdoor play, etc.) as often as you would like?

121 responses



If you answered "no" to the question above, please identify why you cannot participate in recreational activities as often as you would like.

42 responses



Additional Comments:

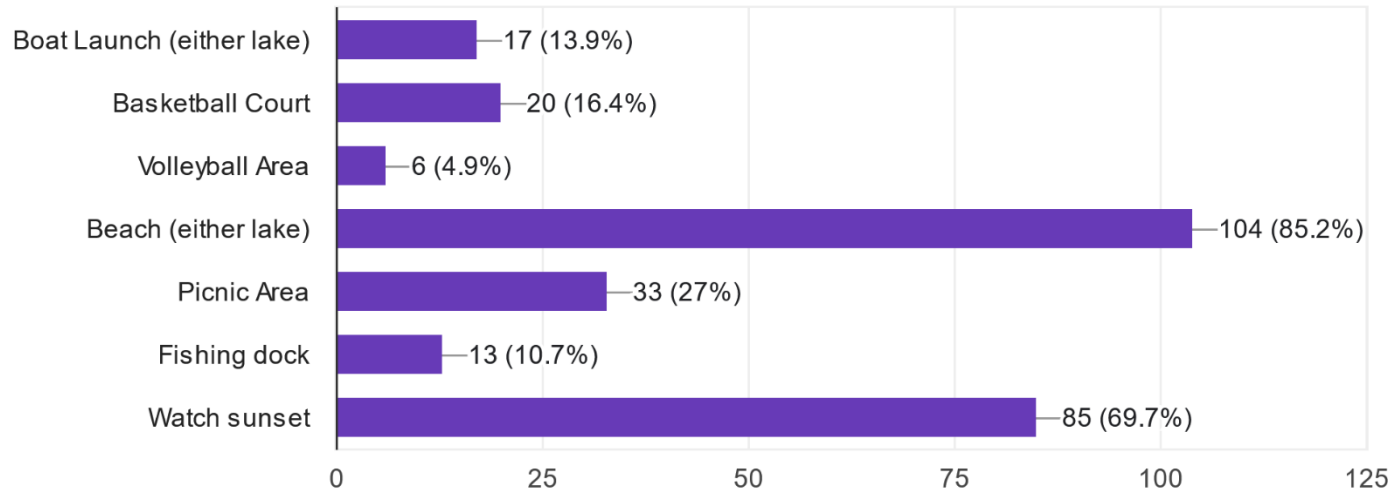
Rain, snow, extreme heat/cold

Lack of awareness—communication—on available options, e.g., is line dancing really available sometime in the hall, as someone has said? Website, email, and other communications (e.g., newsletter?) might be improved.

I would like to join EACC, but I don't know who to call - and they meet when I am working.

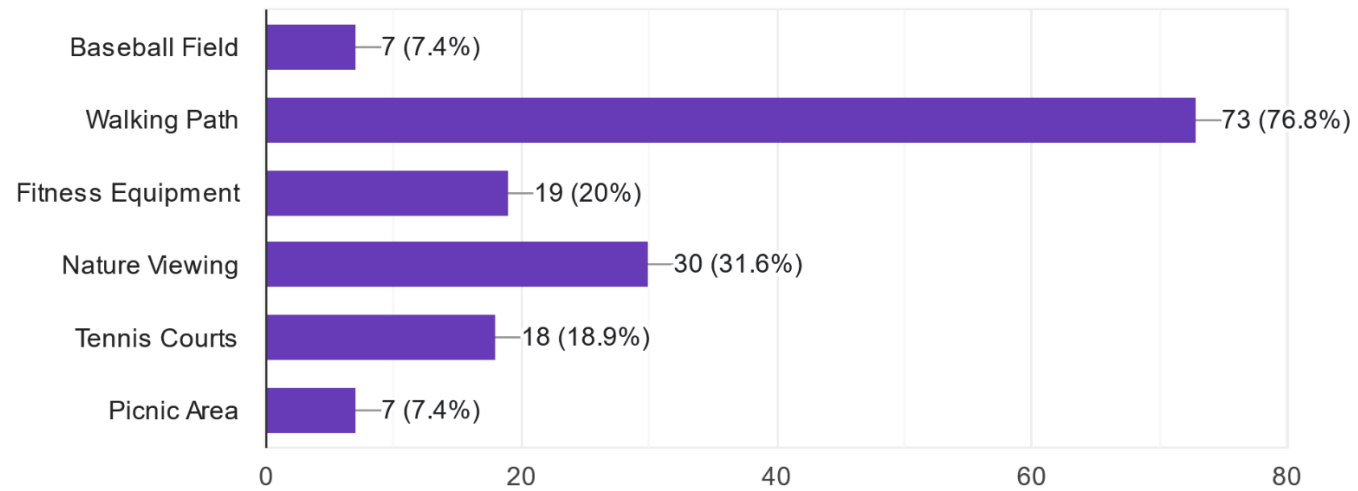
Please select the Lake Michigan Beach Park amenities you frequent the most

122 responses



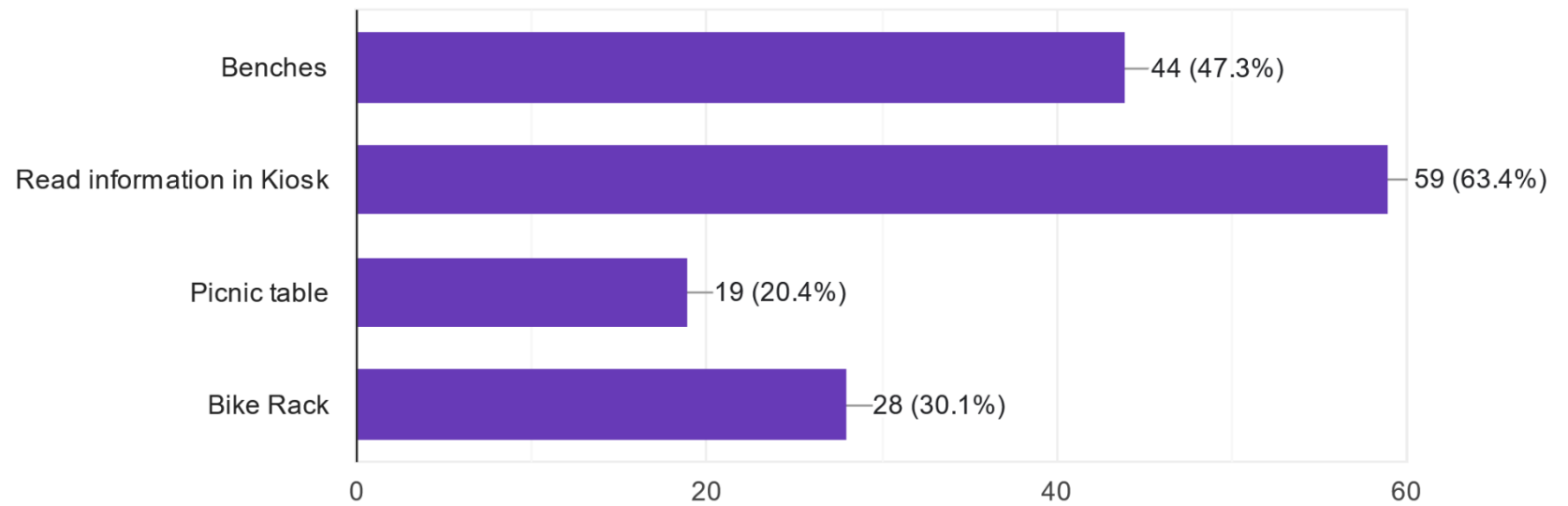
Please select the Shalda Park facilities you use the most

95 responses

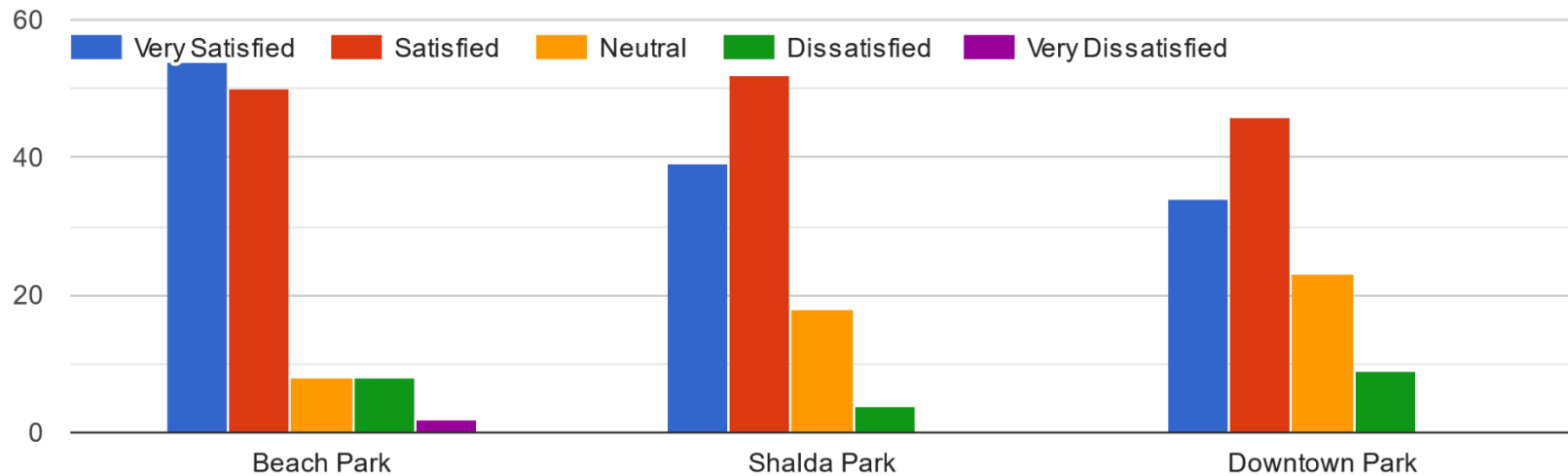


What Downtown Park amenities do you frequent the most?

93 responses



Overall, how would you rate your satisfaction with the maintenance and appearance of Empire's parks?



Need better signage to help people understand distinction between public and private beaches,
There needs to be better signage that educates the public regarding what is public property north of Empire Beach. Presently there is a very small sign that's not worded appropriately regarding public rights and owners rights. This is creating significant problems and it's the city's responsibility to address this problem.
The parking and playground equipment detracts from the natural beauty of the lake.
I wouldn't qualify the open grass by the post office to be a "park". If so, I would add much more there.
Lots of trash at the beach in the summer
Love the beach parks, but wish more signs were posted stating not to build fires outside of pits. The allowing of fires not in the designated fire pits, takes away from the beauty of the beach.

Would love a bathroom at downtown park.

Beach park could use new fire pits

The fitness equipment is not good for people over 35-40 years. It is hardly used.

There needs to be better monitoring of the waste receptacles at the beach. During busy times, they are overfilled and create unsanitary and an unattractive appearance. This sends the visitors a wrong impression regarding the Village of Empire. Perhaps a "Gator" type vehicle or even a pick up truck could be used to empty them a few times during the busy beach use days. Summer beach employees could do this when full time employees are not available. Job descriptions could be changed to reflect the additional duties.

Never go to Shalda park and didn't know the area by the PO was considered a park.

Quality of beach sand is poor and should be groomed/cleaned regularly.

Covered pavilion needs maintenance and regular cleaning.

I think the downtown park could be more inviting by having some screening plantings between the park and the house in the back, maybe a gazebo and more benches or picnic tables. It doesn't feel like a park. It's just an open space. Nothing invites you INTO the park.

Beach sidewalks and parking lots constantly covered with sand. Condition of pavilion needs work (dirty overhead lights, sand piled inside, structure needs TLC). Beach access points (including/especially the Storm Hill access point) must have any and all rocks removed. No one should have to navigate a minefield to get onto the beach.

Make the parking lot lights night-sky friendly.

Paint arrows/install signs on Niagara roadway entry (the "loop") to beach indicating one way traffic.

New and more fireplace rings, which it sounds like the Village may already be addressing.

More garbage cans, maybe two more. It is obvious that beach area/parking lot usage, especially in summer, has outgrown its capacity.

Raise the parking ticket penalty: summer visitors have been heard to say they'd rather take what they consider the small risk of "possibly" getting a parking ticket rather than pay the hourly parking fees because the difference between ticket cost and hourly fees isn't enough to deter them from chancing not paying the hourly fees.

Shalda park I play with my dogs. Turn one of the ball fields into a dog park.

The sand on the walk ways and road at the beach is uninviting.

The Volleyball court needs to be rid of rocks. Seen many people hurt their feet.

The baseball fields need to be redone on a yearly basis.

There is no scoreboard at the baseball fields. The fields are used more than what the residents know.

Attention to details are substandard. It's somewhat better this past year, however.

Better/quieter hoops at LM park would be nice. Shalda needs pickleball courts.

The swings at the beach park are excellent for kids to play on. Best swings you'll find at a park.

Our sweet little village is enhanced -- especially for residents == because of our green spaces! -- provided by village as well as businesses -- and resident upkeep of their areas as well

bathroom maintenance

The beach park is an important access point for walking the beach and enjoying travel to/from the Sleeping Bear -- the increased unfriendliness of private property owners, particularly with improperly placed and/or inaccurate beach signs (e.g., dune restoration below the high-water mark) is a problem for Empire's identity.

Would like to see trash cans available year round. Especially by post office/downtown.

The Empire beach is my favorite place in the whole wide world. All in all I think the village has created a wonderful place to recreate - however I am very dissatisfied with the anthropocentric approach to an ever changing environment by placing massive and dangerous rip rap onto our beach & a sea wall with what seemed like very minimal consultation with professionals in dealing with sustainable solutions for beach erosion. Who knows how these rash decisions will continue to affect one of the greatest beaches in the world for generations to come.

The Downtown Park is not accessible enough and does not have enough picnic tables, or any type of cleanliness.

Beach: need more fire rings (and signage about using them or active patrolling!?) to keep sand cleaner

Would like the beach bathroom to be less disgusting.

The Shalda and Downtown parks need more trees.

Love the idea of creating additional uses for the "park" by the post office!

Beach Park needs less "stuff" becoming too commercialized.

I would like to see more money spent on Shalda Park and (I had not thought much about the downtown park until this survey came along) the little park by the post office (downtown park)

Could do more to make that little "downtown park" better.

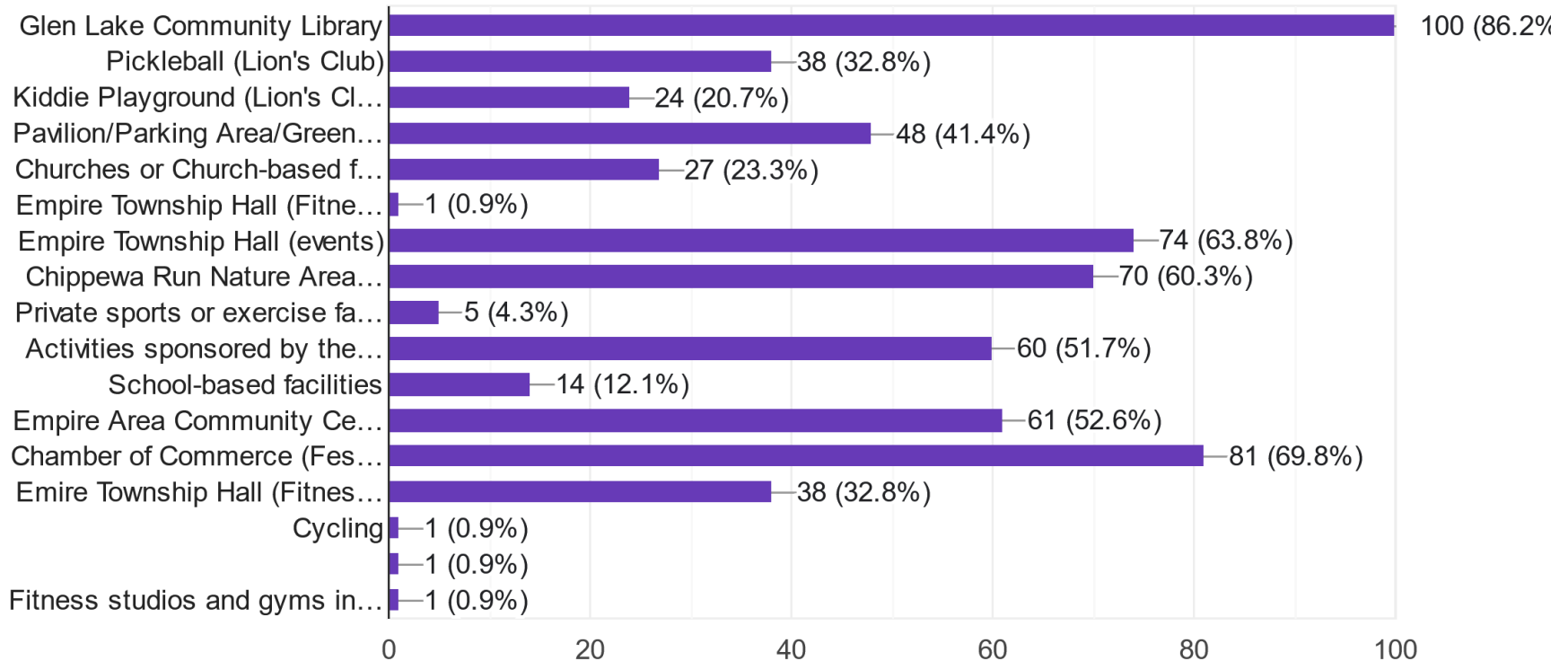
Would like to see more at Shalda Park

Beach showing much wear. Be more proactive with maintenance. Don't buy or construct if can't be properly maintained.

Summer months more trash pick up and restroom cleaning

The Village has partners who also offer residents recreational opportunities (we call these facilities "quasi-public facilities"). Which of these do you use?

116 responses



Additional items not mentioned in the list:

Heritage Trail

Township Hall for village meetings open to public.

We use what ever we can attend Would love to see improvements/expansion of pickle ball courts

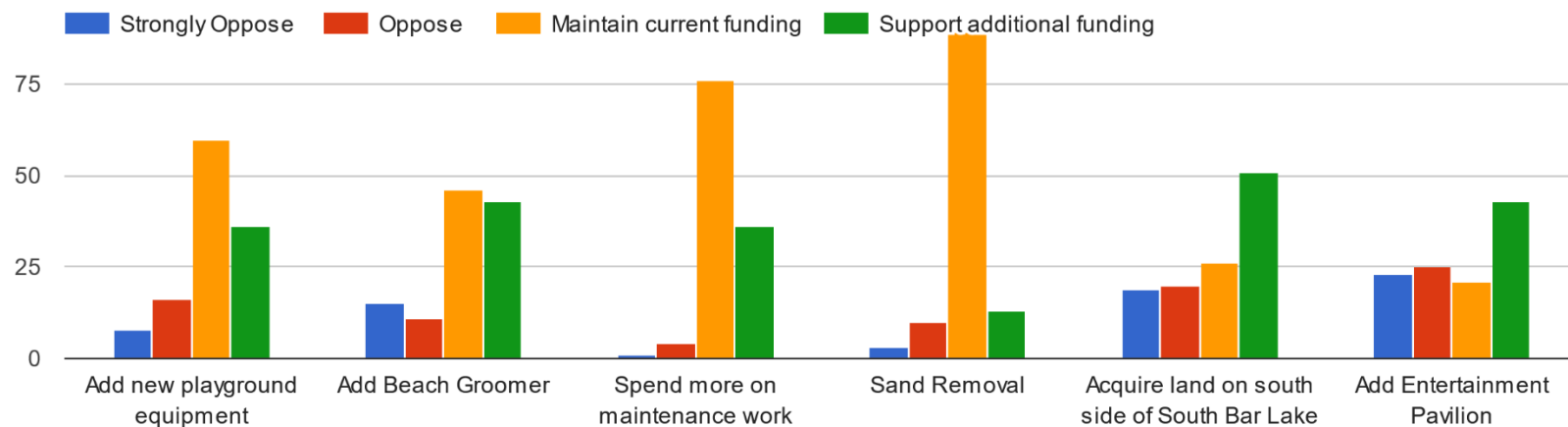
Fitness studios and gyms in Traverse city and Leland

For such a small village - lots of opportunities!

Empire offers a lot of opportunities for people. A village of 300 people can only do so much. Developing stronger partnerships with the townships should be considered..

Not sure everyone sees how much such a small village already does!

To what degree do you oppose or support Empire spending public funds on developing or improving existing facilities at the Lake Michigan Beach Park?



Use space this to add other activities

Bowling

Buy the old school house or the green barn. This community is too cool to let it go to waste.

Add Flush toilets

Acquire land at the outlet of S bar lake to ease beach walking

Better stairs from each parking lot to the beach to allow more access to elder folks and those with mobility issues. And upgrade or replace the current bathroom since that is Empire's only true public restroom.

New restrooms, PLEASE. Use parking funds to pay for playground equipment. Our tax dollars should not be used for tourist enjoyment. Tourists benefit a few local businesses who in return do not return benefit to the community.

As stated prior Mired in pickle ball courts with improvements to current courts

Better/quieter bball hoops

Could easily add small entertainment pavillion in the park next to post office – while still providing snow piling pace as necessary I strongly support acquisition of the South Bar Lake outflow to Lake Michigan (or relocation of same, which has been considered in the past) -- i.e., spend money on nature not more pavillions and playgrounds. Empire resident taxpayers are paying to maintain the creek and the outflow-drain infrastructure, but private landowners prevent children -- and the otters -- from playing in this creek like children have done for eons. The public pays for this private creek/drain/road for private landowners but there is no public use of it allowed -- the public funds this private drain/creek infrastructure but is not able to use it -- the public cannot traverse the infrastructure they pay for and and is forced to wade the creek -- even in the winter -- when walking the beach..

Public wood fired sauna!!!!

Accessibility initiatives to support access to the water

nature focused boardwalk (bird and bear watching, etc) thru a portion of wetlands along southbar lake if that land is acquired

Hire someone to do more bathroom cleaning and upkeep at the beach

Last thing the Village should do is purchase more land along South Bar Lake!

Entertainment? Seriously. The sunset isn't enough? Bands or movies need to find a different location.

Maintain the beach park; don't "do" anymore to it. Get rid of the rocks.

Let the beach park be the beach park. It is overdeveloped as it is. Acquiring SBL land will be bad for the environment and the Village needs to spend money on more important things.

I am new to the Village, but adding more "stuff" at the Beach Park takes away from what makes it attractive.

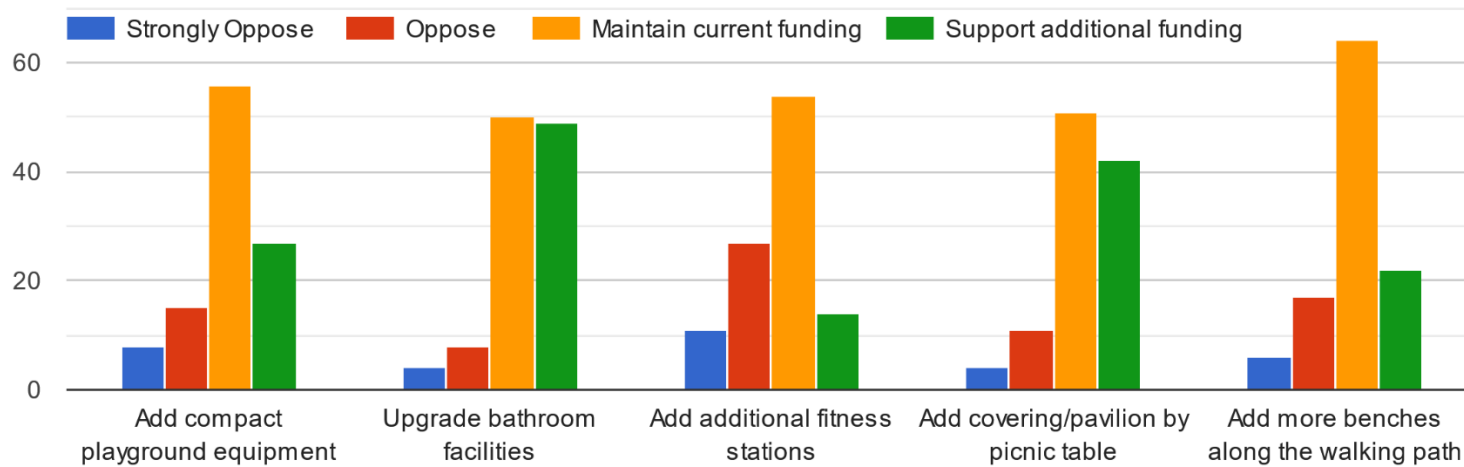
The Beach park should not be turned into an amusement park.

Plant more trees

This is a biased question. (See paper copy for full explanation)

Cut down dead trees on beaches especially south bar

To what degree do you oppose or support Empire spending public funds on developing or improving existing facilities at Shalda Park?



Use this space to add other ideas

Buy the old school house or green barn.

Shalda Park is not the best location to invest more money in

Invest more dollars in Shalda Park

Make one tennis court a pickleball court

Much of the fitness equipment at Shalda Park is not functional.

Need better fitness equipment

Add some playground equipment and this will be a great park. Rivals Garfield Twp Park. Village residents not using this don't know what they are missing.

Our tax dollars would have been better spent on new restrooms instead of Shalda Park. There is more than enough walking paths in the village if the sidewalks would be maintained. PLEASE do not spend more of our tax dollars on Shalda Park!

I see people using this park regularly. It remains a bit of a hidden gem. I know serious walkers don't use it - but they will if they ever need any sort of surgery

Covered pickleball facility, if you build it they will come. Could use an indoor facility.

Dog park

Also continue to plant shade trees.

Add dog waste bag dispensers. Many people use the park to walk their dogs.

Turn one of the ball fields into a dog park.

I'd like to have a couple fitness stations near the library and post office.

Add pickleball courts

Use your funds on the South Bar Lake outflow and on doing something with the vacant Storm Hill buildings -- better to have spent your 1/2 million on one of those buildings than the new office that's not on main street, imo.

Would prefer Johnson park as focus over Shanda, as it is center village

Public Sauna

Definitely do not add more fitness stations that are not adjustable. Would strongly support REPLACING the existing fitness equipment with equipment that can be adjusted and thus used by different sizes of people. Add more trees (native selections) along the walking path. Assuming water is potable, make the artesian well into an attractive drinking fountain and jug filling station like is on north side of Portage Lake (on portage point drive) in Onekama- or make that area into a garden of water and wet soil-loving native plants (would then ideally fence off area from deer).

Add trees. I've never seen anyone use the fitness stations. Epic waste.

Shalda Park was a fabulous addition to the Village. It has been so important to me as I recovered from knee surgery. A safe place to walk is so important.

Great addition to the Village.

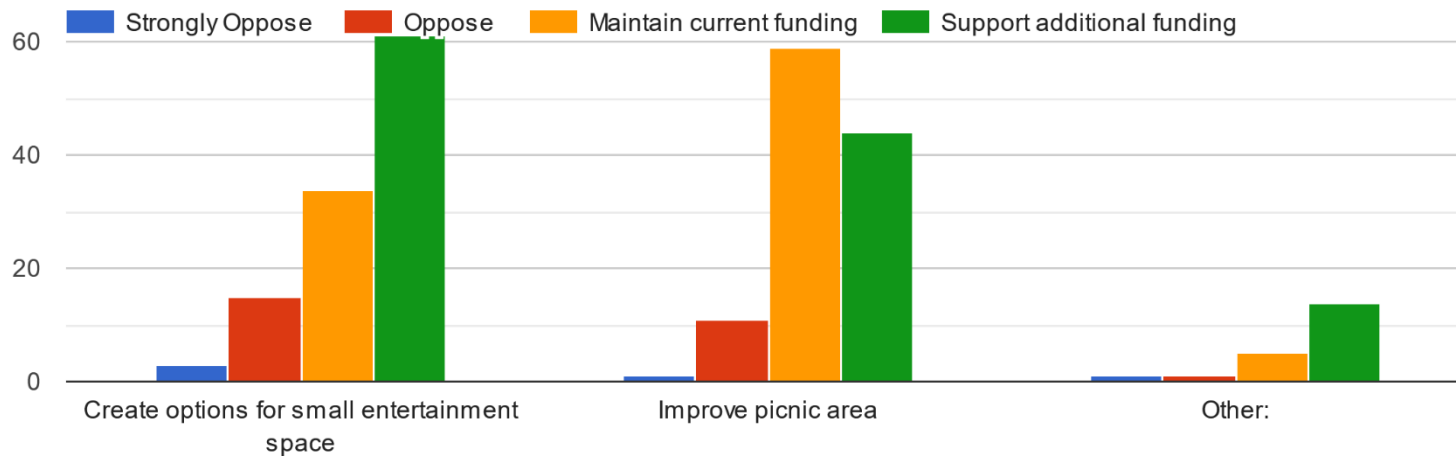
Shalda Park is the park to invest in. I don't think the Village has to invest too much of our taxpayer dollars in this - get grants from local entities: Huntington Bank, State Saving Bank, more DNR funding; I hear someone talk about T-mobile having a grant opportunity.

That walking path is amazing for this Village. We use it as often as we can. Any improvements made to that area are well worth the costs. Look for grant dollars.

Plant more trees

Need indoor pool, fitness stations do not fit my body, not adjustable

To what degree do you oppose or support Empire spending public funds on developing or improving existing facilities at the Downtown Park



Additional Comments -Downtown Park

I would like to see a commercial community kitchen.

Restrooms

I would like to see the Village spend more \$\$ on areas that can be used by residents and less on the beach park. I think the beach park has move away from its natural roots. Too commercialized.

Bathroom

Have better Xmas trees, the current trees are poor quality. Many surrounding communities have wonderful Xmas trees. A lot of them have a tall tree and have lights that are very appealing to people.

Good spot for a public restroom. Glen Arbor has an ideal situation that is provided there. Seek grants to fund with a design that would provide an easy hook-up to a sewer when available.

Public Bathrooms and Play Area A gazebo would be aesthetically pleasing and could be an entertainment/stage area. Walkways would be nice to lead you to the gazebo and to benches. Maybe a small play area for kids.

An entertainment space and a fitness thing.

Add a Public restroom

Public bathrooms

This area is too small -- acquire more land for such activities -- e.g., the vacant unused Storm Hill building/properties that remain a decades-long blight on Empire.

I would love to see some improvements that are inviting for the public to hang out and take a load off

Empire needs modern public restrooms open 24/7 at least during tourist season. Perhaps this could be a good location to fill that need.

A public restroom is needed but the location needs to be well thought out.

Add trees.

Freshen up the Information Kiosk. Maybe a movie night or some other entertainment might be good there. I don't think the Village government is responsible for this - would the Chamber or EAAC take this on, if improvement were made?

With some planning, this could be a great little entertain space - make sure you don't lose the farmer's market.

The information kiosk could use a make over.

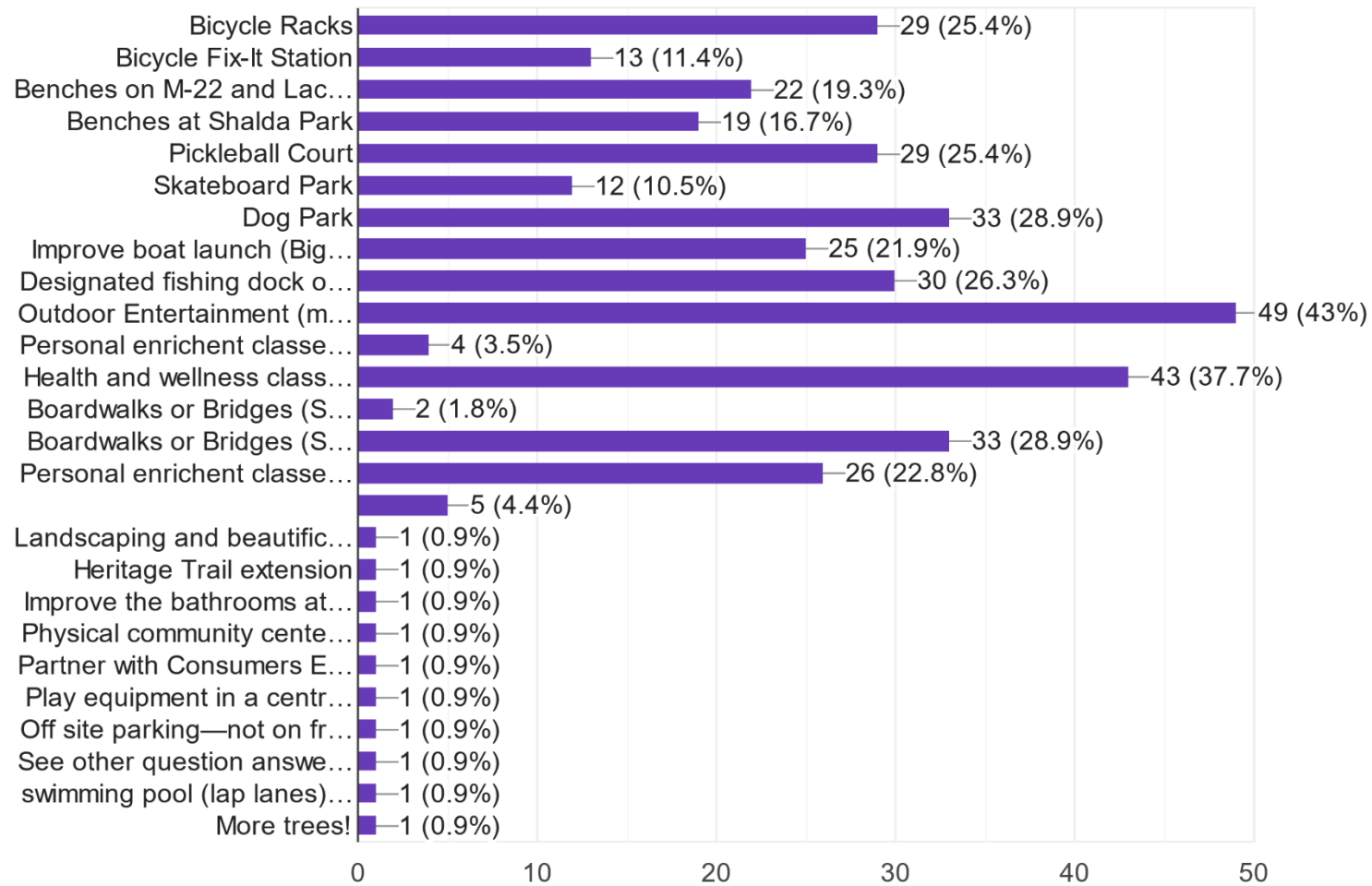
I had not thought of the "option" of an entertain space there. Interesting idea. Might be a good thing to try - and if it takes off - maybe find a way to do something bigger at Shalda Park?

This is an interesting idea. One that I like. Gives groups options.

More picnic tables

Considering purchasing costs, construction, and maintenance, which park or recreational facility would you like to see more of in the Village? (Please check your top three)

114 responses



If you selected other, please specify.

There needs to be public access across the south bar outlet without getting feet wet. The property owners don't want people to use the road, which absolutely should be annexed into the village, and the small barrier dunes are off limits. Create a bridge or path of some sort to allow the public to walk north as far as anyone would care to go!

Bridge from Shalda Park to the Chippewa Natural Area

Locker rooms too

Partner with Consumers Energy to provide nesting platforms at beach park. Consumers provides the opportunity to install the poles platforms were the Village of Empire so chooses. A platform could be placed on the South Bar Lake side near the restroom, out of the way, to provide habitat the either Eagles or Ospreys. As long as the requesting entity is a government or 501c3, they will work to place a pole. The Village of Empire would have to build a platform to place on the top of the pole before installation. A monitoring camera would be an option.

Take care of what we already have. upgraded restrooms are needed more than anything else.

KID FRIENDLY -

Public restrooms

Public wood fired sauna, downtown or at beach- we have so many cold water enthusiasts

swimming pool (lap lanes) open fall thru spring minimum. Weight room/indoor fitness center center

More trees!

Lions Club and SBL Association have said NO to Board walk or Bridge along SBL. This is not an environmental sound decision.

No additional "parkland" purchases are needed by SBL. This would be a waste of money and bad for our natural beauty.

Absolutely no boardwalk or bridge at either park. Huge cost; no benefit to residents.

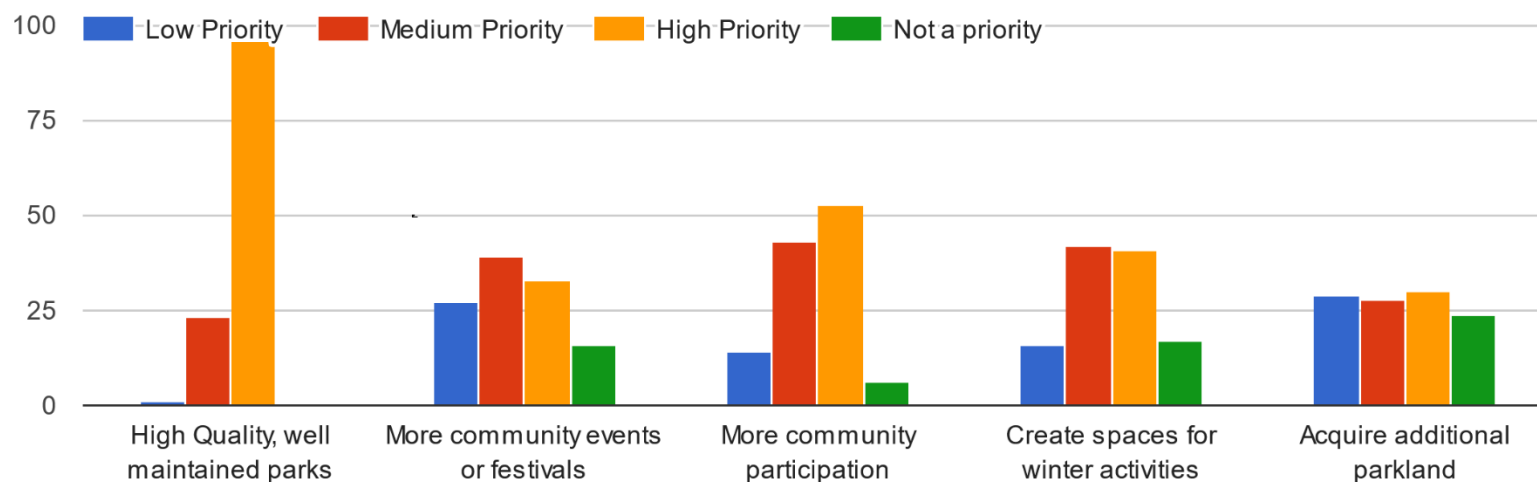
Boardwalks and Bridges are costly endeavors. It is not just the cost of building, it is also the cost of maintaining that needs to be considered.

No bridges or boardwalks. No reason to spend dollars on those.

tai chi fitness class

need pool for aging community and teaching swim classes

Considering purchasing costs, construction, and maintenance, what are YOUR top priorities for recreational amenities for the next five years?



What additional recreational opportunities/programs would you like to see in Empire for children under 12 years old?

- Kid festivals, kid parties at the hall, nature walk club, opportunities for kids and retirees to spend time together
- A modern skate park; updated, playspace;
- A gym for children in the winter time
- Collaborate with the library and school district! No need to be in silos.
- Some different playground equipment.
- summer camps
- ice rink

Water sports events, craft classes

Swim lessons

After school activities at the town hall or outdoors

After school swimming programs

Day camp for the youth. Offer crafts, hikes, swimming, field trips, fishing

Craft classes, outdoor adventures, ice skating rink

None

Baseball/softball

Tennis

The parks already have a lot of playground equipment.

I'd love to see some sort of programming for parents/kids to gather, possibly at the town hall, during the winter months. A weekly drop-in open gym could encourage community connectedness and give kids a space to run around after school.

Youth Tennis & swim lessons! More play equipment and year round activities in empire for kids 6-10.

SWIMMING LESSON FOR EVERYONE KIDDES 2 TO 102 YRS OLD

I have grandkids that use both the playgrounds at the beach and also the one at Johnson Park. I think their needs are pretty well met. Maybe some cornhole or Connect Four games at the downtown park just to entertain them while their parents shop, etc

There are several play areas for children in this age group. The library offers some programming. It seems the best thing for this age group is safe playing areas

A roller skating rink and ice rink

Please keep the swings, if you replace them let new ones that are the same size. I beg you. 🙏

Game day event annually

Opportunities to play in a natural creek where otters have traversed -- South Bar Lake outflow -- and other opportunities/programs that encourage natural play and knowledge and appreciation for our natural world -- i.e., privilege that natural over artificial playgrounds.

Swimming lessons & safety

Designated sledding hill (at Wilco Road), Water Safety classes

Water sports, outdoor activity, arts & music

Having a skatepark in the village would bring in young families and create a better economy through such.

Outdoor movies & popcorn, swimming lessons

swimming pool (fall thru spring), art center

Winter activities, ice rink, community garden

Soccer fields

1. a skate park in lions property so its accessible and 2. swimming and water safety classes

None.

Playgroups?

Classes for kids on Saturday morning?

Games or activities on the weekend.

Water sports in the summer, snow activities in the winter - ?

I will be restoring the old high school. Basketball, volleyball, and other activities could be arranged with the help of the village.

What additional recreational opportunities/programs would you like to see in Empire for teens 12 - 18 years old?

Bowling

dances at the hall, opportunities for teens and retirees to spend time together

Skate park

A workout gym

Nice basketball court at beach

jobs with the National Park

ice rink

water sports classes such as sailing

Water safety

Social gatherings

A center for them to congregate. Community dances

skate park, outdoor adventures, ice skating, intro to hobbies, etc.

Bowling Alley

Better basketball hoops./backboards at Empire Beach.

Weekly programming through the library, be it book clubs or a photo club or other opportunity that helps give teens access to art and literature. It would be so lovely for adult residents to volunteer to teach a class and give teens the opportunity to strengthen inter-generational ties in the community.

LAKE WATER TESTING FOR SOUTH BAR AND LAKE MICHIGAN. SO INFORMATION DOES NOT BECOME MIS INFORMATION.

Maybe a skateboard park

How many 12-18 year olds are there? They have the lake, easy access to bicycle paths, basketball courts, access to pickle ball, etc. Their schools have team sports. Again, I don't know what more a village can do. Winter indoor activities (if the town hall is available) would be good.

How many 12 to 18 year old kids do we have to justify spending money on such things.

Same as above

Gathering place, music, outdoor games

Same as above.

Meetups for biking, skateboarding, swimming, crafting,

Designated sledding hill, Water Safety courses, Skatepark (!)

Water sports, outdoor activity, arts & music

Same answer as above.

Outdoor movies and/or dances

swimming pool (fall thru spring), fitness center, art center

Community garden

Soccer Fields! Teen basketball tournaments!

Swimclubby, soccer field

1. a skate park in lions property so its accessible and 2. Swimming and Lifesaving classes

None.

Not sure

Could older kids be the teachers for the younger kids games and activities?

Maker station at Library?

Makerspace in the library?

30 years ago we employee PE students to run 4-14 yr daily summer activities, skateboard, soccer, baseball, football guided courses

What additional recreational opportunities/programs would you like to see in Empire for working age adults?

Wi-Fi for entire village

Childcare, food prep, art studios

Continue to invest in outdoor gathering spaces, fitness/social clubs based in the town hall.

Entertainment, organized kayaking and hikes

More pickelball courts

Heritage Trail extension
Pickleball, connector trails
Cooking class. Dances
I love the idea of a pavilion and boardwalk near South Bar Lake
Boardwalk from Johnson Park to Empire Beach, music event
Monthly or quarterly activity night...square dancing, cross country skiing, movie, etc.
Coffee shop
Pickleball/tennis
There is enough - please maintain what we have
Pickleball
Additional and improved pickleball courts - indoor and outdoor.
I would love to see a physical community center with an indoor gym and meeting space. Even a small amount of fitness equipment in a membership-based space would be so beneficial!
A community center
A walking club.
An archery range and swimming pools
Evening events
Bike trails
Pickleball courts/lessons/organized play
Same as above.
Public wood fired sauna! Great way to make community year round
Designating sledding hill, skatepark, empire beach sauna
Water sports, outdoor activity, arts & music
Having a nice high quality outdoor event center for more community events, concerts etc
Surfing lessons, beach gatherings
swimming pool (fall thru spring), fitness center, art center
Community garden, public sauna
Cross country skiing group
Indoor gym for winter activities. Stationary bikes, BB court/pickleball court etc...
More yoga and exercise classes
None.

Cooking Classes; personal enrichment classes

Cooking Classes, Crafting classes

Crafting classes; hot topic lectures (the library does some of this already!) They need to open later than 7:00 for lectures. (I understand this is not a library survey!).

We would take a cooking class; crafting class

Personal enrichment classes.

Evening classes. All kinds.

Providing guided activities

I would like to have yoga, karate, basketball, pickleball, dances, and other activities

What additional recreational opportunities/programs would you like to see in Empire for retirees?

Wi-Fi for Empire. A coffee shop with Wi-Fi

More fitness/yoga classes (I do participate in FESB 2Xweek), art/crafting groups, more evening music/entertainment.

Hiking trails

Pickleball courts

Heritage Trail Extension, organized walking groups

Craft or art classes, sailing

Cooking class, concerts, festivals

Tai chi, yoga, craft circles

Organized game days, cards

We could have community dinners with social activities.

Field or travel trips...also look at the programs offered at the Grand Traverse Senior Center

Pilates, yoga, volleyball, softball

Provide opportunities for social gatherings and informational speakers.

Coffee shop

Pickleball/walking

there is enough - please maintain what you have

Pickleball

Additional and improved pickleball courts - indoor and outdoor.

I think a gym space would be beneficial to retirees as well.

Dog park

Fitness center with weights and machines and classes

Picnic area

I'm not aware of the special programs currently available, so I don't know if more are needed.

More pickle ball courts at Shalda Park.

Indoor Swimming Pool

A swimming pool

Charge more for out of town visitors at the beach, it's very crowded.

Social club with activities

Same as above

Book club, craft classes, water sports classes (sailing)

a good way to provide adults and seniors -- healthful -- and connectable activities with others.

Fitness classes/ a public center

Personal enrichment classes, empire beach sauna

Water sports, outdoor activity, arts & music

Being all fully accessible.

Yoga. Strength training, book clubs

swimming pool (fall thru spring), fitness center, art center

Community garden, public sauna

Assistance with site seeing

Indoor gym for winter activities. Stationary bikes, BB court/pickleball court etc...

More yoga and exercise classes

None.

Cooking Classes; personal enrichment classes; healthy aging workshops

Cooking Classes, Crafting classes; talks about aging in place, health

Aging in place lectures; improve the sound quality at the Township Hall

More lectures? The library already does a lot of this.

Tai chi fitness class

more bicycle/trail connections to SBHT and the parks, coffee shops, gathering place

pool

yes please