



# PARKS

## Highly Regarded by Illinois Residents

The Illinois Association of Park Districts is dedicated to helping our members thrive through education, research, and advocacy.

The information in this brochure is based on a statewide online survey of Illinois residents conducted by aQity Research & Insights, Inc.

For more information on IAPD's research efforts, please go to [ILparks.org](http://ILparks.org).

**IAPD**  
Illinois Association of Park Districts

## INCLUSIVITY

87% of Illinoisans feel that their local park district is **representative** and **inclusive** of all groups in their community.



## HIGHLY REGARDED

Park districts, forest preserves, and conservation districts continue to be **held in the highest regard** among Illinois residents in comparison to other units of local government.

## 9 OUT OF 10

residents agree that parks and open space help to **improve local property values**.



## THE VAST MAJORITY

of Illinoisans believe that park districts are good stewards of their tax dollars.

## MOST RESIDENTS

continue to express a **willingness-to-pay** for the following:

**Acquiring Open Space  
for More Trails**

21% Strong Support

36% Support

26% Undecided

**Maintaining/Improving Existing  
Park and Recreation Facilities**

25% Strong Support

40% Support

21% Undecided

## 1 OUT OF 2

residents who live within a forest preserve district report visiting a forest preserve in the past year.



## SATISFIED VISITORS

The vast majority of recent forest preserve and conservation district visitors **highly rate their overall experience** at these destinations, the amount of agency acreage available, the overall accessibility to these locations, cleanliness and upkeep, and personal safety.





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## Improve the Quality of Life to Illinois Communities

Park districts and forest preserves in Illinois provide numerous mental and physical wellness benefits. These agencies are accessible by all residents regardless of social or financial background, race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical abilities.

As this report demonstrates, park districts and forest preserves continue make a positive impact on the communities they serve.

## Park districts, forest preserves and conservation districts improve the quality of life of communities throughout Illinois

### Research Methodology

These findings are based on a statewide online survey of Illinois residents who live in communities served by a local park district, and/or a countywide forest preserve or conservation district. The survey was conducted “blind”, meaning the IAPD was not identified as the survey sponsor. Comparisons are made throughout to responses from similar statewide surveys conducted by IAPD in 2002 and 2013.

Data collection began in June and ended in July 2022. A total of 2,076 Illinois residents completed the survey. For data analysis, the sample was weighted to reflect updated US Census data for the Illinois population by region, gender, age, race/ethnicity, and presence of children under age 18 in the household.

### Key Findings

Park districts, forest preserves, and conservation districts continue to be held in the highest regard among Illinois residents compared to other municipal, township, county, and state agencies.

When informed that park districts receive about 5% of residents’ property taxes (on average), most Illinoisans rate their local agency a good or excellent value overall given the services, facilities, and programs these agencies provide.

In addition, 88% continue to agree that parks and open space help to improve

local property values.

Similarly, most residents continue to express a willingness-to-pay for:

- Maintaining existing parks and recreational facilities in their community
- Acquiring land to restore and protect natural areas and wildlife habitats
- Acquiring land for more trails
- Building or expanding new recreational facilities

Overall, 71% rate the overall quality of life in their community as excellent or good. More importantly, across eleven local attributes tested, **both “the availability of recreational programs and facilities” and “the amount of open space” rank among the top three attributes having the biggest impact on a community’s perceived quality of life (along with local village/city services).**

Most (approximately 60%+) recent visitors to park districts, forest preserves and conservation districts continue to be most satisfied with:

- The overall experience during these visits
- Accessibility to these locations
- Cleanliness and upkeep of these properties

- Personal safety
- The number and variety of parks, and the acreage and variety of forest preserve and conservation areas
- The quality and number of recreational programs offered by park districts.

Nearly nine out of ten Illinoisans feel that their local park district is representative and inclusive of all groups in their community (regardless of social or financial background, race and ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, or physical abilities).

IAPD extends our thanks to Jeff Andreasen and his team at aQity Research & Insights, Inc. for their work in gathering this information. During the last 25 years, he has been responsible for research and consulting services to public policy clients, focusing on recreational and open land issues.

This survey once again shows the incredible benefit that park districts, forest preserves, and conservation districts provide to communities throughout Illinois.

Peter M. Murphy  
IAPD President / CEO

## IMPROVING QUALITY OF LIFE

The availability of **recreational programs and facilities** and the **amount of open space** rank among the **top three attributes** having the biggest impact on a community’s perceived quality of life and rank higher than schools.

