



# LIFE at Leisure

*“Excellence” for the Fox Cities is defined as:*

Citizens of all ages and ability levels:

- Engage in creative activity
- Attend affordable arts and cultural events offered in the community and support the arts
- Enjoy regular, satisfying indoor and outdoor recreational activity for overall physical, mental, and social well-being
- Have access to clean, safe rivers and lakes, trails, parks, and other outdoor resources for recreation

# LIFE of Leisure

<b>Arts and Culture</b>	Citizen perceptions of arts opportunities Attendance at arts events in past six months Financial support from Wisconsin Arts Board Annual attendance at performing arts events and museums
<b>Libraries and Enrichment</b>	Library utilization and per capita transactions Library expenditures per capita UW-Fox Valley programs and attendance Appleton Art Center program attendance
<b>Outdoor Recreation</b>	Miles of trails Park acreage per 1,000 population Parks with access for disabled Use of natural recreation space
<b>Recreation Programs</b>	Local recreation program use patterns Youth opportunities and perceptions
<b>Other Leisure Opportunities</b>	Citizen and leader perceptions of leisure opportunities Tourism assessment findings

***For more information on leisure:***

Wisconsin Arts Board <http://arts.state.wi.us>  
Fox Cities Online recreation listings <http://www.focol.org>  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Library information <http://dpi.wi.gov/pld/dm-lib-stat.html>  
Trails and Greenways [www.focol.org/greenways](http://www.focol.org/greenways); <http://www.neenahtrails.com/>  
Northeast Wisconsin Trail map <http://dnr.wi.gov/org/land/parks/reports/trails/new.html>  
Fox Cities Convention and Visitors Bureau <http://www.foxcities.org/>  
Fox River Locks Restoration Project <http://www.wisinfo.com/foxlocks/>

Selected additional information for each section of the 2006 LIFE Report can be found in Appendices at our website: <http://www.foxcitieslifestudy.org>

# Arts and Cultural Opportunities

## Data Highlights

- **Figure 1** In 2005, 69% of citizens rated arts/cultural opportunities above average, compared to 52% in 2000.
- **Figure 2** In 2005, 62% of citizens had attended a cultural event in the past 6 months compared to 68% in 2000.
- **Figure 3** Per capita grants to arts organizations in the Fox Cities area by the WI Arts Board were well below the state average.
- The Fox Cities Performing Arts Center estimated serving approximately 200,000 guests in fiscal year 2004-05.
- Fox Valley Symphony estimated that 12,000 people attended concerts in 2004-05, similar to prior years.
- The Appleton Art Center reported that in 2005 they served 20,140 persons, up from 8,500 in 2000. The Art Center offers exhibits, tours, and classes for children and adults.
- Lawrence Academy of Music provided individual or small group instruction to approximately 2,000 adults and youth in 2005. Lawrence University offered 215 concerts, 11 theatre productions, and many other public arts programs in 2005.

## Progress and Concerns

Residents in the region enjoy a variety of cultural opportunities, including the addition of the Fox Cities Performing Arts Center since the last LIFE study (repeatedly cited by people in many different focus groups as a source of pride). A number of musical opportunities exist locally, as well as numerous smaller art galleries and exhibits. The multi-cultural aspect of the region is on display. Residents appreciate that many of these opportunities are very affordable and often free.

Persons working within the "Leisure" sector believed that arts organizations should seek more opportunities to collaborate. Multicultural events are sometimes perceived as solely for the particular ethnic group and must be developed and shared across cultures. And although they felt affordable arts opportunities exist, persons of lower income seem less aware of them.

Figure 1

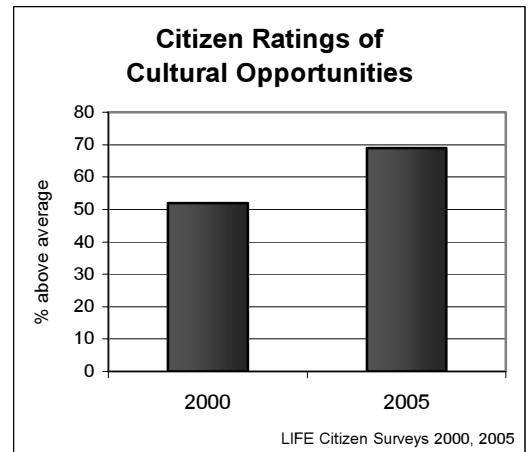


Figure 2

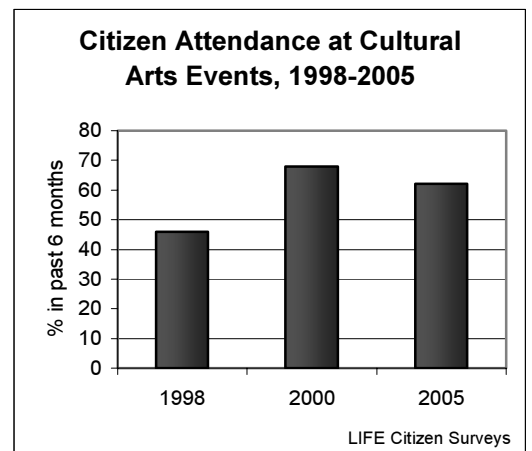
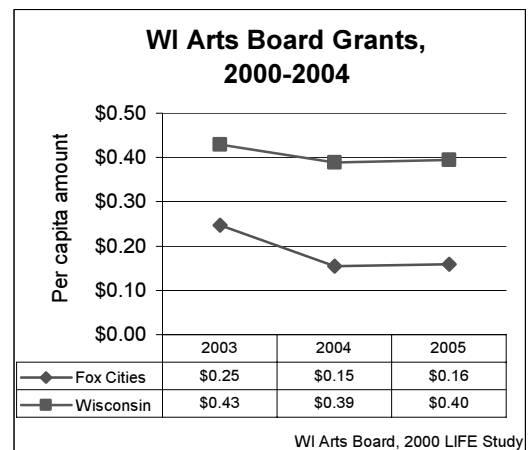


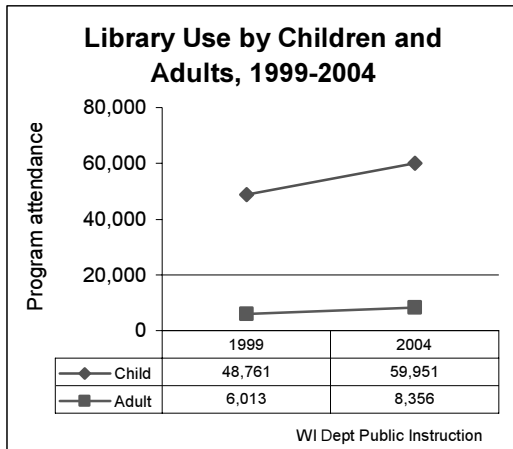
Figure 3



*75% of leaders believed that the Fox Cities does a good or excellent job of attracting and rewarding talented persons in art and music.*

# Libraries and Enrichment

Figure 1



## Data Highlights

Summarized data from the library systems in the Fox Cities area, including Kimberly, Kaukauna, Appleton, Neenah, and Menasha.

- **Figure 1** In 2004, program attendance by Fox Valley children had reached almost 60,000 visits, an increase of 23% over 48,671 in 1999. Adult attendance rose 39%.
- **Figure 2** Adult circulation transactions grew from 1.10 million in 1999 to 1.53 million in 2004; child transactions from 1.00 to 1.13 million.
- **Figure 3** Library transactions per person in the Fox Cities is nearly double the US rate. Transactions per capita rose from 11.1 to 12.2 between 1999 and 2004.
- 93% of leaders and 72% of citizens rated the quality of library services Good/Excellent.
- Library operating budgets rose 20% per capita between 1999 and 2004, from \$30 per capita to \$36 per capita in 2004 (for the five systems cited above).
- In 2005 UW Fox Valley's Barlow Planetarium had 37,953 visits, 6% less than in 1999.
- In 2005 UW Fox Valley served 1,003 adults in its general adult programs compared to 1,313 adults served in 2001.
- In 2005 Appleton Arts Center education programs served 20,750 adults, children, and youth, a 93% increase over 2000 (10,750).

Figure 2

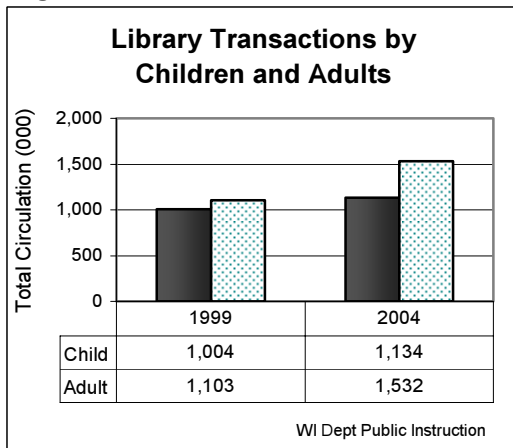
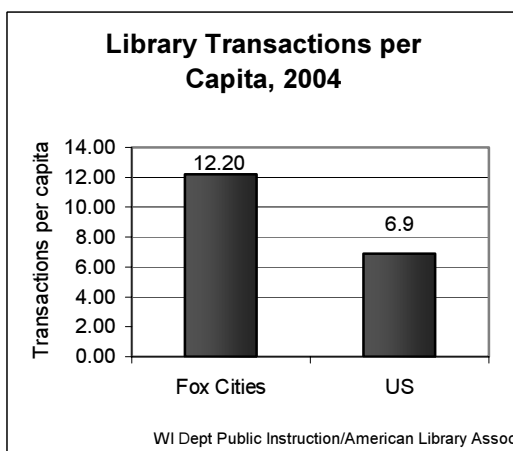


Figure 3



## Progress and Concerns

Residents, leaders, and focus group participants recognize local libraries as tremendous assets in the area. Library programs for children have risen dramatically in the past few years and use of libraries far exceeds national averages. Numerous museums, education institutions, and other organizations offer classes, programs and other educational opportunities. Young children are especially well served.

These agencies continue to seek ways to engage the increasingly diverse population and persons that are typically less involved in enrichment programs.

*13% of citizens indicated that they had taken an internet college course or training program.*

# Outdoor Recreation

## Data Highlights

- **Figure 1** In 2005, 72% of citizens rated physical recreation opportunities (sports, exercise programs, parks, outdoors) above average, a rise from 56% in 2000. The number of citizens reporting using recreation facilities remained at 75%, the same rate as in 2000.
- **Figure 2** Annual visits to High Cliff State Park were up to 819,900 in 2003, a 10% increase from 1999 (741,588)
- **Figure 3** Park acreage increased between 1996 and 2000, from approximately 11 to 14 acres per capita (ECRPC, 1996, 2000)
- The Northeast Wisconsin area (including the Fox Cities) has one of the highest concentrations of nature centers in the US, with 17 centers covering over 12,000 acres and 150 miles of trails.
- The Fox Cities Trestle-Friendship Trail opened in August 2005 as a result of a broad community effort that raised \$1.6 million. The Riverwalk Trail project in downtown Neenah (under development) will cover 1.5 barrier-free miles. The Fox Cities had approximately 55 miles of trails in 2005 compared to 47.8 in 2001 (Fox Cities Greenways) (Note, exact methods for counting miles may differ).
- According to the East Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, in 2004 the Appleton urbanized area had 5,081 acres of recreational land use, 3% of total acreage. In 1996, there were 3,640 recreational acres, 4% of total urbanized land.
- Phase 1 of the \$28.8 million Fox River Locks Restoration Project will restore the 4 locks in the Appleton area, opening the Fox River to recreational boaters and riverfront economic development.
- Appleton has 29 parks, all with some features accessible for persons with disabilities; one park is fully accessible. Neenah has 21 parks with accessible features including trails, ball diamonds, fishing decks, shelters, and more.

## Progress and Concerns

Outdoor recreation opportunities topped numerous focus group lists of strengths of the Fox Cities area: boating, parks and nature centers, and golfing opportunities, to name a few, are excellent. There are numerous winter leisure opportunities.

However, participants in four focus groups expressed interest in additional public lands with larger woodland acreage such as High Cliff State Park in Calumet County. While there are many local neighborhood parks, they tend to be smaller.

Figure 1

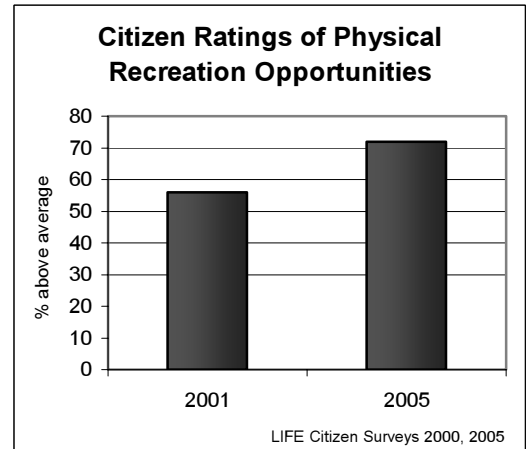


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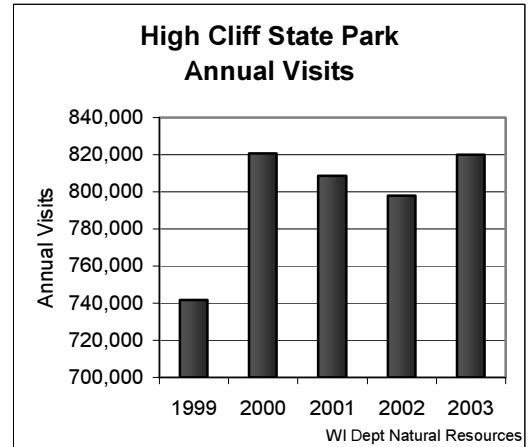
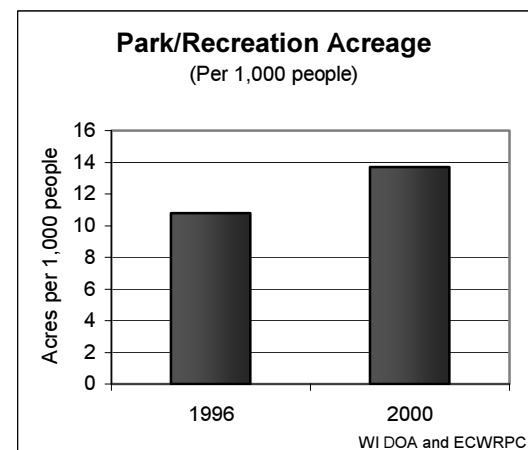


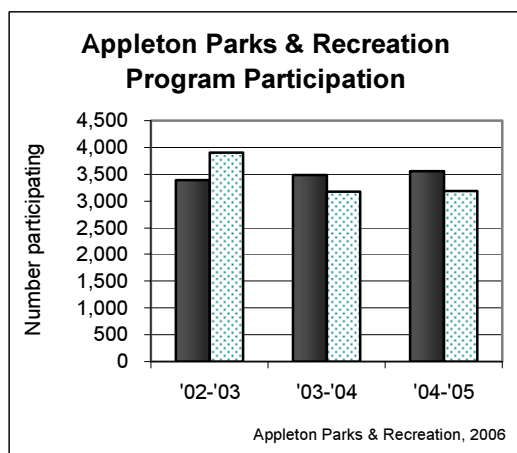
Figure 3



*90% of citizens indicated that the Fox Cities provided good or excellent outdoor recreation opportunities.*

# Recreation Programs

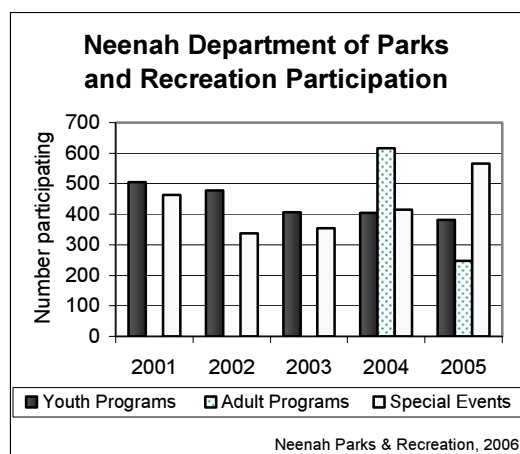
Figure 1



## Data Highlights

- Figure 1** The Appleton Parks & Recreation participation by adults under age 55 increased (primarily from growth in softball leagues). Youth program participation declined between '02 and '03 then stayed level the following year. In only its second year of offering programs for older adults (over age 55), the agency experienced a 13% increase in participation in its fee-based programs, serving 10,845 persons in 2005.
- Figure 2** Neenah Parks and Recreation Department experienced declines in participation by children as numerous alternative programs now exist within the community. Appleton officials report similar trends for children.
- Appleton Parks and Recreation Department offered “Drop in” open gym times for youth in 2004-05, with 1,662 youth attending.
- In 2006 the YMCA of the Fox Cities had over 26,000 members, compared to 18,000 in 2002 (Post-Crescent 3/19/06).

Figure 2



## Progress and Concerns

There are many affordable recreation programs available in the Fox Cities area and many residents participate. Involvement by older residents appears to be growing.

In several focus groups, participants had animated discussions about youth sports programming. Most agreed that parents have become very involved in youth sports programs and at times become highly competitive. Children increasingly specialize at very young ages and spend a great deal of time traveling and competing in tournaments or camps arranged by their parents. When a child reaches early adolescence, chances for involvement in sports drops for less athletic youth.

When asked their opinions of opportunities that exist for teens in sports programs, many youth felt that “only the athletes” were involved and they would like to see more opportunities for fun, non-competitive physical outlets for the average teen. These activities would not have to be led by parents.

Participants in the leisure focus group suggested a need for open play spaces in neighborhoods, where youth could organize their own informal activities. Increasing physical activity would reduce obesity rates of youth. Moreover they suggested increasing awareness and ease of access to recreation programs for persons with lower incomes or of minority racial/ethnic groups.

*93% of leaders said the area is good or excellent at encouraging youth to explore interests and participate in positive activities.*

# Other Leisure Opportunities

## Data Highlights

- **Figure 1** Both leaders and citizens gave very high marks to the availability of leisure opportunities locally.
- **Figure 2** On average, citizens rated the availability of leisure opportunities for their families as “good.” Fine arts, cultural and recreational opportunities were rated similarly. Citizens were asked how well the Fox Cities offers leisure opportunities that reflect a variety of cultures; their responses indicate they feel the area is above average.
- **Figure 3** Leaders rated fine arts and recreation choices highly while expressing a lower (but still favorable) opinion of leisure activities that reflect cultural diversity and opportunities for persons with disabilities.
- Similarly, leaders thought that the Fox Cities area was just above average (2.8 out of 4) at ensuring persons with disabilities can remain actively involved in community life.
- A 2004 Tourism Assessment found a variety of appealing cultural and retail attractions throughout the Fox Cities. At the same time the study recommended improved promotion strategies.

## Progress and Concerns

Participants in several focus groups agreed that the number and quality of restaurant choices in the Fox Cities area far surpasses that of other similar sized communities. They also agreed that the Fox Cities has enjoyable seasonal events such as Arts Festivals, Country USA, Fox Jazz Fest, Farmers’ Markets, and other celebrations. Retail shopping was noted as a strength by several focus groups, including working parents, business, both young adult groups and youth.

Focus group participants believed the Fox Cities area can do a better job of engaging minorities in arts and recreational opportunities across the area. The libraries are perceived to be good at doing this. Diverse cultural events take place but the area could improve at cross-cultural participation in these events, i.e. they are not just for the benefit of the group leading it, but for all members of the community.

In our focus groups, many youth, working parents, and young adults (both professional and technical) expressed interest in existing local leisure options. The young adult groups found the idea of riverfront development very appealing and envisioned a pedestrian area with interesting shops and unique restaurants.

Figure 1

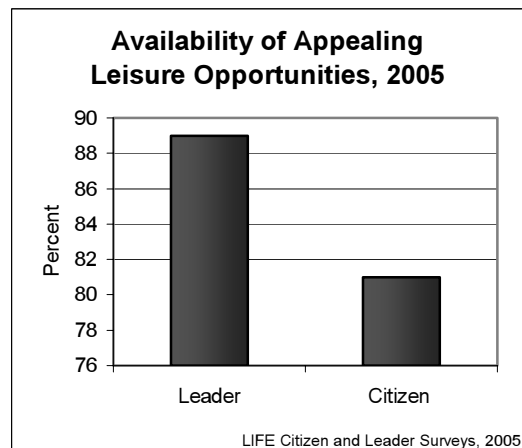


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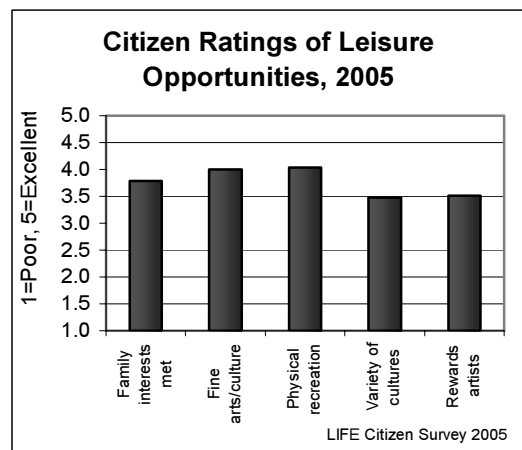
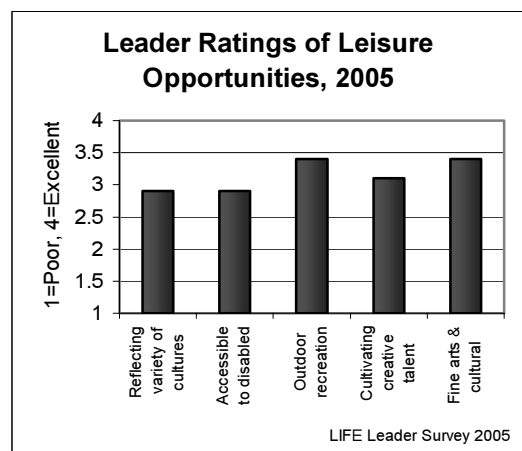


Figure 3



*90% of citizens indicated that the Fox Cities provided good or excellent outdoor recreation opportunities.*