

WATERVLIET CHARTER TOWNSHIP

“Where the Waters Meet”



Parks and Recreation Plan

2019-2023

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Acknowledgements

Thank you for all of the participation and input from the community leaders, residents and neighboring communities in the preparation of this plan.

Adoption

Municipality	Public Meeting	Public Hearing	Adoption of Plan
Watervliet Charter Township			

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Introduction

Watervliet Charter Township has a long history of providing parks and recreation opportunities for its residents and visitors. The Township has seven (7) municipally owned park/open space areas. Investments in the township parks and recreation have been guided by long-range master planning and funding through local government appropriations, grants, and private donations. The most recent Parks and Recreation Plan will expire December 2019. The prior plan was certified by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) for a five year period.

Need for Updating Plan:

- * Recognition that the current plan will expire under the MDNR requirements and to submit a new plan for certification by the MDNR.
- * The assessment of current parks and determines future needs of the community.
- * To identify changing needs and opportunities for growth in tourism activities.

Purpose of the Parks and Recreation Plan

The purpose of the Parks and Recreation Plan is to provide the necessary framework from which to develop an integrated and coordinated approach to the provision of parks and recreation facilities, and natural resource protection. Under the requirements of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and the Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund Act of 1965, the Township must prepare and maintain an Outdoor Recreation and Open Space Plan. All land acquisition and park development funded through these programs will be consistent with the approved State and Federal Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plans.

From the Township's perspective this Plan will provide guidance for future improvements and growth of recreational facilities.

Community Description

History

Watervliet Charter Township has historically served as the center for agriculture and commerce for the surrounding countryside due to its close proximity to the CSX Rail line and proximity to Interstate 94 (I-94). Before the construction of I-94, Red Arrow Highway was the major transportation route between Indiana and other Michigan communities.

First inhabited by the Miami Indians and then the Potawatomi Indians. The area that has become the Township enjoys a rich heritage dating back to at least the 1600's. It is believed the first white man to have crossed the territory was French Priest Father Marquette in 1675. In the early 1800's settlers were drawn to the area's fertile land and the opportunities it offered for farming and lumber.

As timber was cleared and the early village of Waterford (later called Watervliet) was established, farming of the newly cleared land became a lucrative business in the area. At one time, fruit agriculture was paramount with more than 2,000 acres devoted to this industry by the 1880's. Harvey Sherwood came to the Township in the late 1880's and became known as the "Apple King of Michigan", with one of the largest orchards in the state. His farm was called Lake View, because of its panoramic view of Sherwood Bay on Paw Paw Lake.

The Township has gradually developed into a residential area, with areas of commercial, light industrial and medical facilities rounding out the community.

Today, the Township is known to be an excellent, upper-class, residential community fully equipped with water, sewer, and waste management. There are paved roads throughout the Township, cable TV, and good recreational programs. The Township is a typical bedroom community with a distinct nature for being a tourist attraction as well as a family vacation destination with the lure of Paw Paw Lake that is known for its beauty and high potential for continued recreational destinations for families.

Location

The Township is comprised of 13.5 miles where 12.5 miles is land and 1 square mile is water and is located in southwest Lower Michigan, in Berrien County. It is 90 miles from Chicago, 35 miles from South Bend, Indiana, 50 miles from Kalamazoo and 90 miles from Grand Rapids.

Locally, the Township is part of "Michigan's Great Southwest" area. The Township surrounds the City of Watervliet and bordered by the cities of Hartford and Coloma and the Township of Coloma respectively. The Township lies between the major thoroughfares in the region, which is Interstate 94 and Red Arrow Highway. While the area is limited in the number of industries, the area serves as a suburban residential community to the "Twin City" area of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph.

Physical Characteristics

This chapter examines the natural characteristics of the Township's topography and climate, as well as the man-made physical characteristics of zoning and land use. It also looks at demographic, economic and social characteristics of the communities. This is intended to provide information about the Township that local officials can use as an aid in making decisions regarding the location and adequacy of recreational facilities within the community.

Land Use Patterns

The Township's location, as well as its natural features, have contributed to the evolution of the communities. Many homes in the Township have been placed in locations, which are best suited to take advantage of the natural views and settings. However, the bulk of the commercial and industrial development has occurred along major transportation routes and in nearby communities. The Township's largest body of water is Paw Paw Lake, shared with Coloma Township.

Residential

The majority of development within the Township is residential. Single-family homes of various sizes are located throughout the Township. This development reflects the original attraction of this area as a place to live that is in close proximity to the business districts of the Twin Cities. The types of homes are mainly modest, single-family residences, but the Township is also intermixed with large expensive homes that adorn Paw Paw Lake.

Commercial

The commercial businesses are principally located on the major thoroughfares of the Township along M-140 and Red Arrow Highway. A variety of services including gas stations, restaurants, medical and dental offices, dialysis care center and hospital as well as many other businesses are located in Watervliet.

Industrial/Other

The industrial sections of the Township are located in areas that have easy access to major transportation routes such as Interstate 94 and Red Arrow Highway. The ability to easily move materials in and out of these locations make them ideal for industrial uses.

Recreation and Open Space

Recreation and open space is a valued asset in the communities. This designation also includes water oriented recreation. A goal of the residents is to actively encourage parks and recreation land use whenever possible to improve the overall quality of life.

Zoning

Watervliet Charter Township is zoned in accordance with official policy on how the land in the community is used and developed. On the Zoning Map it is evident how the Township is currently zoned to encourage residential development with industrial and commercial areas located near transportation routes.

Topography

The last glacial period, some 13,000 years ago, left behind several unique geological land forms in Southwestern Michigan. The area in Watervliet encompasses some of Paw Paw Lake and provides for river corridors with extended wetland areas and flat to rolling topography.

Over 10,000 years ago glaciers that advanced southward from Canada covered Berrien County. Because this glaciation was so extensive, the landscape was heavily impacted, and these impacts can still be seen today. One example of this is the slight variations in relief in the Township as well as surrounding areas. This gently rolling topography is, however, slightly interrupted within the Township by the Paw Paw River and its tributaries. These hydrologic features have cut valleys through the Township providing some areas with steep slopes.

Along the majority of Berrien County's shoreline, there is a belt of sand dunes that extends about a quarter of a mile from the lake. This diverse topography makes the Township a very attractive location to live and work. There is a number of areas in the community that have yet to be utilized to their full potential in regard to the recreational opportunities they possess according to the public input into this plan.

Soils

The soils in the Township are also the result of glaciers; therefore, soil types vary widely in texture, permeability, stability, composition and other characteristics throughout the community. However, through the use of the Berrien County Soil Survey, it is possible to make observations about the soils in this area. There are five major soil types in the Township. Table 1 lists the names and general characteristics of these soils.

It should be noted that these are just broad generalizations of the soil in and around the Township and are only meant to provide a broad understanding of the soil conditions in the area and should only be used for general land use planning considerations. To determine the suitability and soil conditions of a particular site, however, further investigation would be needed.

Table 1. Township Soil Types

Name	General Characteristics
Cohoctah Sandy Loam	Nearly level with moderate possibility. Generally located along flood plains of rivers or streams.
Houghton-Kerston Mucks	Gentle Slope with low permeability. Located along floodplains and are usually left idle.
Shoals Silt Loam	Slightly undulating slope with moderate permeability. Acceptable for many uses including development.
Plainfield – Urban	Nearly level, excessively drained soil. Ideal for building.
Thetford – Urban	Nearly level somewhat poorly drained. Suitable for development.

Source: U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and Soil Survey of Berrien County, Michigan, 2010.

Climate

Lake Michigan has a moderating effect on the prevailing westerly winds that influence the Township climate. The lake is responsible for keeping the area cooler in the spring and summer and warmer in the fall and winter. This results in a growing season that is approximately 180 days.

The average temperature is 33.4 Fahrenheit in the winter, with an average daily minimum temperature of 20.1 Fahrenheit. In the summer, the average temperature is 71.7 F and the average daily maximum temperature is 94.7 F. The annual precipitation is 32.29 inches on average with 58% falling from April through September. The average seasonal snowfall is 60.1 inches and there is an average of 84 days that have .1 inches of precipitation or more. Source: Weather Underground 2017

Transportation

Interstate 94 serves as the primary transportation route from other Midwestern states, making it one of the most important thoroughfares in Watervliet and the state. The Interstate 94 interchanges at M-63 (Niles Ave.), M-139 and Red Arrow Highway provide convenient regional access to the Township.

Commercial airline flights are available at both the Michiana Regional Airport in South Bend (35 miles south) and Kalamazoo International Airport (45 miles to the east). Local service is available at the Southwest Michigan Regional Airport (5 miles northeast) in Benton Harbor.

Amtrak passenger service terminals are located in Niles (25 miles), St. Joseph (2 miles), and New Buffalo (30 miles). High speed Amtrak service between Chicago and Detroit is also provided along Amtrak’s major route, with plans for high-speed rail service that exceeds 100 mph to be implemented in the coming years. Watervliet was once a dominant rail station for goods.

Vegetation, Wildlife and Fish

Some of the Township’s native vegetation has been lost to development of either farming or residential areas. However, some relatively undisturbed areas are still available along the Paw Paw River where you will see Beech, Maple, Oak and Hickory tree cover typically privately owned small wood lots where mature trees remain undisturbed and some larger tracts of land that remain undeveloped. Both are exceptional areas of natural beauty and are important sources of bird and wildlife habitat in the Township. Lake Michigan also provides excellent opportunities to view wildlife as well as opportunities for salmon and perch fishing. The former Watervliet Paper Mill property along the Paw Paw River provide for picturesque views, fishing and natural habitat for wildlife.

Social Characteristics

A careful study of population and other general demographic characteristics is vital in the development of a community’s recreation plan. It is important to understand the composition of a community in order to determine the nature and amount of community facilities and recreation services that are needed to best serve its residents.

Population

The Township, like other areas around Michigan has seen a decline in population over the past 15 years.

Table 2: Population----- Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Municipality	2010	2015	2020 estimate
Township of Watervliet	2,876	2,900	2,950

Age

Municipality	Persons 0-4yrs	5-17 yrs	18-64 yrs	65 and over
Charter Township of Watervliet	6.13%	22.84%	57.41%	13.62%

The median age is 48 years for the Township. The trend is one of an aging population. The aging of the “Baby Boomers” coupled with the fact that people are living longer, will help to shape the way this part of the state continues to develop and also plan for parks and recreation activities.

This 5-year plan is an attempt to view the recreational needs and wants of the entire population. While youthful activities are still the first options that come to mind when asking about recreation, it is the baby boomers that will have the most need for appropriate activities to keep them active.

Persons with Disabilities

As part of the 2010 Census, mobility and self-care limitations for persons 16 years and over who are not institutionalized was reported. In 2010, there were 486 people in the Township of Watervliet between the ages of 16 and 64 that suffered from a mobility limitation.

It is a significant goal of the planning process to address the recreational needs of those persons with all abilities. Therefore, the planning process, assessment and the future needs of the recreational facilities in the community will accommodate this segment of the community and further incorporate activities and apparatuses to attract the aging population, senior citizens and people with all abilities through the planned improvements of the parks and recreational amenities.

Housing

There are 3,765 housing units in the Township according to Census 2010 with an occupancy rate of 87.9%. A percentage of the vacancy is due to the presence of homes used only occasionally for recreational and seasonal purposes.

Owner-occupied units represent 85% of the housing units in the community. This means that 15% percent of the housing units in the Township are renter occupied. This helps to identify the kind of recreation needs the Township should consider in this planning process.

Income

Table 3: Median Household Income in 2010

	Median Household Income
Township of Watervliet	\$ 43,525

As the median household income level indicates, there are a fair number of households in the Township with high-level income levels. This could be a result of the lakefront homes that are in the Township that are situated on large tracts of land or along Paw Paw Lake.

In the 2010 Census, 91.854% of the residents were determined to be above the poverty level for in the Watervliet community.

Employment Trends

Employment is diverse, and there is not one sector that controls a majority of the workforce. There are several major employers in the area including the Community Hospital, Lane Automotive, Watervliet Dialysis, Grace Christian Schools, Watervliet Public Schools and the Four Winds Casino.

Administrative Structure

The Township is organized under the Charter Township Act of 1947. As a Charter Township, it has additional local discretion and general taxing power greater than a township organized under General Law. The Township Board adopts an annual budget for Parks and Recreation.

The Board of Trustees is the official, elected governing body of the Township and is authorized to adopt ordinances, enter into agreements and contracts, authorize expenditures and indebtedness, hire staff and take any other appropriate actions on behalf of the citizens.

Current funding for Parks and Recreation is through the appropriations of the Township annual budget in the General Fund. Other funding sources may include, but are not limited to, MDNR grants, public and private foundation grants and/or awards, special appropriations and other forms of public finance.

The current budget for the Parks Department and related activities is \$6,000 for fiscal year 2018-2019.

The Township collaborates with Berrien County when it comes to Parks and Recreation activities in the region. Berrien County Parks and Recreation Department is developing a large tract of land in the City and Township that used to house the Watervliet Papermill. This area will be an attraction for the area focusing on a multi-use facility for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities.

The County Parks Department finished part of the park development in September with a parking area, barrier free kayak launch, pedestrian bridge to the island parcel, landscaping, trash and recycle bins, security lighting, overlook decks for fishing and wildlife viewing and photograph as well as over ½ mile of hard surface walking trails.

Recreation Inventory

The Township’s park and recreational facilities were inventoried by Robert Lohr from the Township and verified by LaGrow Consulting through onsite visual inspection. An inventory was also taken of surrounding community parks to assist in our planning phase for future development of the park including input from officials and residents of the Township. Included in the data collected are recreation facilities owned by schools, municipalities and the County.

The Township has received funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for developing current parks in the past.

Accessibility Assessment

During the inventory phase of the parks and recreation plan development, evaluations included accessibility assessments using Michigan Department of Natural Resources standards. It is the policy and procedure of the parks maintenance department to purchase and/or construct ADA compliant playground equipment as part of its routine maintenance programming. Each park was scored and is described as follows:

Township of Watervliet Recreation Facilities

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Amenities</i>
Sunset Beach	Located off Forest Avenue 0.5 acres Accessibility Rating: 2 – Some of the facilities/park meet accessibility guidelines.	❖ Mini Park	❖ Lake frontage ❖ Pier ❖ Parking area
Forest Beach Park	Located on Shore Lane 0.5 acres Accessibility Rating: 2- Some of the facilities/park meet accessibility guidelines.	❖ Mini Park	❖ Lake frontage ❖ Pier ❖ Parking area ❖ Portable restroom
Woodland Park	Located on Lake Avenue 0.5 acres Accessibility rating: 1- None of the	❖ Mini Park	❖ Grassy area for foot traffic only

	facilities meet accessibility		
Pomona Park	Located off of Lake Avenue 0.5 acres Accessibility Rating: 2 – Some of the facilities meet accessibility.	❖ Mini Park	❖ Lake frontage ❖ Parking area ❖ Flagpole
Bluffview Park	Located off of Bluffview	❖ Greenspace	❖ Open space
Harper Ave Formerly parcel 5 and 6 of Mill Site	Located off of Harper Avenue- 33.7 acres	❖ Greenspace	❖ Open Space
Township Hunt Site	Located off of M-140 – 2 acres	❖ Greenspace	❖ Open Space

Comments: The conditions of these parks are good, however, are relatively undeveloped. The Township believes adding restrooms, additional parking, pavilions and picnic areas as amenities that will increase park usage.

Ranking System used to access the facilities/park and access routes to them.

1 = None of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines.

2 = Some of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines.

3 = Most of the facilities/park areas meet accessibility guidelines.

4 = The entire park meets accessibility guidelines.

5 = The entire park was developed/renovated using the principals for universal design.

Private Recreation/Public Facilities within Watervliet

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Facilities</i>
Grace Christian School	Located on M-140 in Watervliet	❖ Various athletic activities
Watervliet South Elementary School	Located on Lucinda Lane. An early elementary school with students attending grades Pre-K thru second grade.	❖ Various children’s playground activities, including slides, swings, and a track for daily walking for children
Watervliet North Elementary School	Located on the corner of Baldwin Avenue and Forest Park. Students attending third thru fifth grades	❖ Various children’s playground equipment ❖ Basketball ❖ Baseball
Watervliet Middle School	Located on E. Red Arrow Hwy. Students attending sixth thru eighth grades (located jointly with the High	❖ Various athletic fields for football and baseball and softball

	School)	
St. Joseph Catholic Schools	Located on Lucinda Lane.	❖ Various playground equipment
Watervliet High School	Located on E. Re Red Arrow Hwy. Students attending sixth thru eighth grades (located jointly with the Middle School).	❖ Various athletic fields
Community Hospital in Watervliet	Located on the corner of Red Arrow Hwy and Medical Park Drive	❖ Par Course –Recent funding was announced in September 2018 for improvements of this area. ❖ Walking area
Woodland Land Conservancy	Located off of Orchard – Nature Conservancy	❖ Walking paths for foot traffic only
Paw Paw Lake Golf Course	Located on Paw Paw Avenue – Public Golf Course	❖ Public 18 hole public golf course
Michigan Dept. of Natural Resources	Located on N. Watervliet Road	❖ Public lake access ❖ Boat Launch
Papoose Park	Located at Pottawatame and Wakazoo 1.0 acres – Exclusive use of Pokagon Heights residents (PHPOA) – Mini Park	❖ Children’s playground equipment
Berrien County North Berrien Park	Located on the former Mill Site	❖

City of Watervliet Recreation Facilities

<i>Name</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Classification</i>	<i>Amenities</i>
Hays Park Historically known as Baldwin Field	Located off of Main Street north of the Paw Paw River – 13 acres.	❖ Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Information Board and Signage ❖ Baseball & softball fields and dugouts ❖ Concession stand ❖ Storage building ❖ Picnic tables ❖ Park benches ❖ Grills ❖ Play structure ❖ Open play areas ❖ Restrooms ❖ Trash cans

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Water fountain ❖ Access and parking ❖ Pavilion ❖ Fishing ❖ Canoe access ❖ Winter Sledding ❖ Skate park ❖ Batting cages
Flaherty Park	Located off of Church Street south of Butternut Street – 7.0 acres	❖ Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Information Board and signage ❖ Pavilion ❖ Grills ❖ Picnic tables ❖ Fishing access
Sterner Park	7.5 acres of open space	❖ Regional Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Picnic tables ❖ Grills ❖ Fishing access
Library Park	Located at Library - .5 acres	❖ Mini Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Signage ❖ Park benches
Memorial Park	Located on Park Paw River 0.1 acres	❖ Mini Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Signage ❖ Placards on nature and wildlife
Veteran’s Park	Located on Main St. 0.2 acres	❖ Mini Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Signage ❖ Benches

Additional Parks and Recreation

Paw Paw Lake

Paw Paw Lake shares its boundaries with Watervliet Township and Coloma Township. Although not listed as a park, the lake plays an integral role for the recreation and economic development in the area.

Paw Paw Lake River Heritage Trail

The start of a trail system in the area is an asset and helps to provide a safe area for pedestrians to access various parks/recreation and points of interest in the community. It also is a relief for the environment by eliminating congestion, and mitigation for air quality. However, the trail system is sporadic with numerous gaps. This area is a prime location for area fishermen to gather. You can find more information at www.pprwt.org.

Description of the Planning Process

The Township instituted the Systems Approach to Planning whereby we assessed the park, recreation and open space needs of the community for meeting the physical, spatial and facility requirements to satisfy the needs of the community. Our approach incorporated public input, surrounding communities input, surveys, community workshops and public meetings.

The decisions of parks and recreation facilities in the Township are made by the citizens through the elected officials of the community through the Board of Trustees. These decisions are made based on a participatory process and common principles of public involvement.

The Township had many steps to arrive at a Parks and Recreation Plan including:

1. The Township reviewed their plan and determined it was in their best interest to start the update process in order to include two (2) new parcels into their plan.
2. The Township hired a consultant and the consultant conducted a site analysis looking at topography and physical constraints on the land to determine areas suitable for development and those areas to remain in a natural state.
3. Through input from the community, types of facilities to be developed in the park were identified based on the local needs and the suitability of the site.
4. A survey was disseminated to residents/key stakeholders and interest groups of the Township.
5. A Draft Plan was developed. The draft plan was disseminated to surrounding communities and made available for public input and inspection.
6. A public meeting was held to present the Plan and solicit comments.
7. The Plan was submitted to the Southwest Michigan Planning Commission, County Parks and Recreation Department, and neighboring communities for their input.
8. The Plan was presented to the Township Board of Trustees for its review and a finding of consistency with the Comprehensive Plan.
9. A public hearing was held to gain any final thoughts, comments, or changes on the plan.
10. The Plan was presented to the Township Board of Trustees for final approval.
11. The Plan is then submitted to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources for review and acceptance.

As the parks and recreation plan author, LaGrow Consulting worked closely with the Township, Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, Disability Network of Southwest Michigan, AYSO, Two Rivers Coalition, Watervliet Parks and Recreation Council, and Watervliet Public Schools, to gather existing parks and recreation information that would be needed to provide a coordinated foundation for parks design.

Utilizing aerial photography, digital photographs, surveys and more were used to compile the information to assess current and future park's needs.

The community Master Plans provides the framework for long-range goals, objectives, and policies related to the development of the joint plan. Within the Master Plan's open space, parks, and recreational facilities are discussed including background information in their respective communities plan. The plan includes detailed land use plans. The Parks and Recreation Plan is adopted as a stand-alone functional plan to the Master Plan.

Description of Public Input Process

Public involvement in the Township planning process included surveys that were mailed to a randomly selected number of registered voters, available at the Watervliet Library, and Township Hall, Survey Monkey, surveys sent to local recreation providers including the Watervliet Recreation League, Disability Network of Southwest Michigan and the American Youth Soccer Organization, availability of the draft plan with a process for written comments at the Township Hall and Public Library, a series of public hearings and presentations at several board/advisory group meetings. All of the public presentations were widely advertised, including written notification to stakeholders and meeting postings.

The meetings were facilitated by Cynthia LaGrow describing the findings of the plan, the survey and the draft goals and action program. Printed copies of the plan were made available to the attending public at all Township meetings. The Township Clerk also recorded comments from the public.

The comments received during the above mentioned public input opportunities were broadly directed at the following areas:

- The need to develop additional soccer fields for the growing interest in the community. Additionally, this area could be developed a multi-purpose field for cricket, field hockey, rocket football and lacrosse.
- Overwhelming support for all types of trails and the need to recognize the level of volunteer support for the trail and the regional significance of the trail in terms of tourism and economic benefits.
- Overwhelming support from the mountain biking community and the need to recognize the level of volunteer support for mountain bike trails, and the lack of adequate opportunities to meet the demand.
- The need to support the renovation of park infrastructure and community-based recreation. In addition, the need for equipment to help maintain and groom the parks.
- The need to support the acquisition of critical properties and environmentally significant natural areas.

- The need to continually monitor and safeguard existing parks from encroachment by development and outside pressures to convert parkland to non-recreation uses. In addition the development of a study to determine additional uses for the existing park uses.
- The importance of neighborhood park and recreation providers to incorporate environmental education and the use of environmentally sensitive elements in the design and development of parks that could include low-impact or “green” development.
- The development of a Pickleball/cricket court area. (Source: www.USAPA.org)

Various comments also were received related to wildlife management, cooperation with planning agencies, the use of parks as an economic development tool, and other items that may be considered more appropriate in other management plans specific to that purpose such as sewer and water improvements.

SURVEY OF COMMUNITY

The Township utilized Survey Monkey, the Township sign, the Tri-City Record Newspaper and the Herald Palladium to broadcast the opportunity for input on the public survey. This presented the best opportunity to target a large, diverse population for the survey. There was a diverse representation. The responses to the questionnaire served as the starting point for developing the initial projects and priorities for this Plan.

<p>1. Do you or any of your family use the Township Parks? (Which ones?)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sunset Beach Park 40 - 46% of respondents • Woodland Park 1 - 1% of respondents • Forest Beach Park 43 - 50% of respondents • Pomona Park <u>2</u> - 3% of respondents <p style="text-align: right;">86 - 100% of Respondents</p>
<p>2. If applicable, please list the ages of the children in your immediate family that use the park.</p> <p>Respondents of the survey had children ranging in ages 1-18 years old.</p> <p>Many of the respondents who did not have children did however, reference their grandchildren and the desire to utilize the parks to provide entertainment for visiting relatives.</p>
<p>3. If you use the park, do you use it only during the summer months or year-round?</p> <p>From the survey respondents, 80% or 69 people used the parks mainly in the summer months. The other respondents left this question blank.</p>

<p>4. What specifically do you like about the Parks (size, equipment, nearness, etc.)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centrally located • Walking and biking areas • Size, beauty, peaceful, variety, cleanliness and quality • Lake access • Parking • Proximity to my home
<p>5. What specifically do you not like, if anything, about Parks (i.e. landscape, equipment, etc.)? (Please identify the park.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise from streets and from other park goers -people are rude • Most parks need playground equipment • Add diaper changers at parks • Add bathrooms • Aging roadways at all parks • Add pavilions or shade coverage • Lack of basketball and tennis courts • Hours need to be extended so you can access parks year round • Dogs off their leashes-dog feces • Add drinking fountains to all park areas • Disrepair/litter • Mosquitoes at all parks and large ticks
<p>6. Would you like any additional playground equipment added to the park, or any removed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playground equipment at Forest Beach • Playground equipment at Sunset Beach • Add a concrete pitch for cricket/pickleball
<p>7. Would you like to see any other park items added to the Parks, (i.e., picnic tables, benches, trash cans, etc.)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cricket and pickleball needs a dedicated park area • Picnic tables at all parks • Benches at all parks • Covered areas for shade from sun • Grills at all parks • Add bathrooms • Add a soccer field that also could be used a multi-sport field for lacrosse • Add parkour – ultimate course with stations for different fitness apparatuses • Adult swings or “Love Swings” for two • Enclosed facility to enjoy year round events at all parks or at the new park by Township Hall • Add a dog run at Forest Beach Park • Add more paved trails for people who are disabled that can connect Coloma and Watervliet to get to the grocery stores and banks

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tether Ball added to Pomona Park
<p>8. What type of recreational property do you own? (Bike, Fishing Equipment, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bikes • Canoes • Kayaks • Fishing poles and supplies • Rollerblades • Segway • Golf Cart • Skateboards
<p>9. What one action could the Township take to improve the amount of outdoor recreation opportunities?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link trails for hiking and biking to all other communities • Provide maps and schedules of activities at the parks • Keep them fee free • More accessible for ADA • Periodic winter plowings • Add water sports to Sunset Beach and Forest Beach Park • Add rental equipment at Sunset Beach and Forest Beach Park • Add entertainment to get the public out to the parks at least once a year • Utilize the water more • Listing/communication of the programs on website and mailings to inform public on who is using the park and what programs are available • Focus on health and fitness more • Diversify new park for other activities • Keep grass cut and use bagger if long grass
<p>10. What one action could the Township take to increase your household’s participation in outdoor recreation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add cricket/pickleball league dedicated grounds • Link the trails/sidewalks and improve the surface • Encourage adult league use of parks and allocate specific times for adults only • Increase hours of use at parks • Add playground equipment at all parks and keep it maintained/repaired • Non-motorized vehicle trails • Add dock to allow for dedicated fishing at Forest Beach Park • Plan special events at parks to increase usage • Add disk golf
<p>11. What other broad initiative/direction would you propose to improve Township outdoor recreation over the next five years?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add cricket/pickleball dedicated grounds to a park • Link all trails/sidewalks

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on health and wellness to encourage park usage • Add playground equipment • Need more shade at all parks • Add dedicated Lacrosse to a park • Use volunteers to help maintain and repair parks • Add a water park or splash pad at a park • Organize a community wide picnic each year or large event • Add shock absorbing materials to playgrounds when you install at Forest Beach • Improve the safety and cleanliness at all parks • Add Wi-Fi to parks so people can use health apps • Parks millage in order to ensure upkeep of parks
<p>12. How long have you lived in the Township or visited the parks in the Township?</p> <p>The respondents to the surveys have lived or visited the parks ranged from 1 year to 36 years.</p>
<p>13. What is the age of the person or persons filling out this survey?</p> <p>The respondents to the survey ranged in age from 18-58 years old.</p>
<p>14. Please feel free to list any other concerns or opinions regarding this matter.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add cricket/pickleball dedicated grounds to a park • Add security/cameras/CCTV • Add flowers and landscaping at parks • Accessibility for non-drivers • Keep parks funded please • Make sure everyone uses a leash and picks up after their pets • Add online reservation system for parks so people can have private venues at the parks, like weddings and family reunions • Add more trash receptacles and recycling • Graffiti • Treat all parks for ticks • You are doing a great job • Good work – keep it up

Overall, the Township was able to capture over 86 respondents to the community survey.

The final process included the following:

1. A presentation before the Township Board of Trustee’s, the constitutionally empowered body that provides guidance on parks and recreation development, at which time public testimony was heard.
2. Submission of the final document to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources.

Surrounding Communities

The Township believes in coordinated planning and this perspective requires thinking and planning beyond the boundaries of the board. The coordination of recreation planning with a comprehensive view from all areas allows for a better understanding of current parks and recreation needs for current and future demographics and physical context of the community and region. The Township wants to avoid duplication of effort and expensive parks and recreational facilities and give all communities involved a greater voice in planning the facilities to serve the entire region. Therefore, the community also made the plan available to the Southwestern Michigan Planning Commission, County of Berrien, Watervliet Recreation Council and the Watervliet Public Schools prior to final adoption for input and coordination of the future plans of the Township.

Discussion of Community Findings

Critical to the success of the parks and recreation plan is the communication between the Township staff and officials, and surrounding municipalities, the school district, sports associations and the residents of the Township.

The Township involved the users of the parks and recreation facilities to assess the important characteristics of the community facilities. Including providing draft plans to the City of Hartford, City of Watervliet, Disability Network, Recreation Association, Berrien County Parks Department and Watervliet Public Schools to obtain their comments and recommendations.

Goals and Objectives

The following are goals and objectives set forth by the Township for the preservation, acquisition and development of parkland, recreation facilities and open space based on the social and physical characteristics of the community including a growth in population and change in the number of people who are physically challenged.

- Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands.
- Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily accessible to all of its citizens regardless of ability, and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.
- Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make the Township a more desirable place to live, work and visit.
- Use Township investment in parks, recreation, and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of the comprehensive/master plans.
- To the greatest degree feasible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile, and help to protect natural open spaces and resources.
- Preserve the rural landscape and natural resources of the Township.
- Provide physical links between public lands by walking trails and/or sidewalks.
- Major floodplains and stream valleys within growth areas designated in the Township's Plan should be acquired through fee-simple ownership to the Township.
- The Township shall continue to cooperate with local jurisdictions and associations in the provision of park and recreation services to avoid duplication of efforts and encourage maximum use of available resources.
- Preserving points of historic and scenic interest shall be considered in the development of parks and open space areas.
- Park and recreation facilities shall be efficiently provided in the most needed locations and with the lowest possible expense to the taxpayer.
- Provide public access points to the river. Such property could be obtained in the following manners:
 - As part of the development process (i.e., land dedication/reservation)
 - Through the granting of easements by the various property owners
 - Purchased as fee simple parcels

- A variety of funding, including Federal, State, local and private non-profit resources, should be utilized in the provision of park and recreation services.
- Multi-use trails should be encouraged within major roadway corridors.
- The Township’s review of applications for roadway abandonments should encourage appropriate conversions to the bikeways and trails system.
 - ❖ Of particular importance is the Township’s future cooperation and collaboration with the Berrien County Parks Department to provide for a North County Parks System will be an important part of moving the recreation and development opportunities forward for the Township.

Action Program

The following is the five-year action program for the Charter Township of Watervliet. This program was developed as a result of the inventory taken, public input and the established goals of the Parks and Recreation Committee. It is the intent to leverage local and private funds with state and federal funds whenever possible.

The recommendations contained in this plan are based on the following criteria for parks and recreation needs of the community that includes:

- Improve or reduce maintenance costs.
- Infill services or structures in recreation and park facilities.
- Acquire land.
- Complement economic development initiatives that serve residents and visitors.
- Provide more parks and recreational facilities to accommodate future growth.
- Improve the access to all parks for persons of all abilities.
- Partner with the Berrien County Parks and Recreation Department on their development of a North County Parks System.

The main highlights of improvements focus on improving existing parks, acquiring additional land to expand the parks system and developing a linear trail system to separate vehicular traffic from pedestrians to various points of interest and parks.

Each improvement listed was given a priority rating to assist the electorate in achieving the goals and actions indicated below:

- | | |
|--|--|
| Priority Level A
Highest Priority | Significant importance perceived to be of highest concern for the community or rectify a problem area. |
| Priority Level B
Mid-range Priority | Short range desirable improvements. |

Priority Level C, D & E Low Priority Proposed projects or action that are long-term or need further study and may require a significant amount of funding.

Township of Watervliet

Park	Proposed Action	Target Year	Priority Level	Projected Cost	Funding Source
Township General	Install/Construct walking/biking trails/paths in cooperation with the City and the County	2019-2023	A-E	\$500,000	*General *MDNR *County *Federal
Woodland Park	Install signage	2020	A	\$1,000	*General
	Install picnic tables	2020	B	\$3,000	*General
Forest Beach	Purchase additional property for beach expansion	2021	A	\$200,000	*MDNR *General *MDEQ
	Increase signage for swimming beach only, no boats within 100'	2021	A	\$1,000	*General
	Install picnic tables	2021	B	\$3,000	*MDNR
	Install grills	2021	B	\$2,000	*MDNR
Sunset Beach	Purchase additional property for beach expansion	2022	A	\$200,000	*MDNR *General *MDEQ
	Install picnic tables and grills	2022	B	\$5,000	*MDNR
	Increase signage for swimming beach only, no boats within 100'	2022	A	\$1,000	*General
	Install playground equipment	2022	C	\$30,000	*MDNR
Township Hall Park	Soccer Field creation with cooperation from the School. Construction concession stand, fencing, bathrooms, install fill and drainage system, clear cut the area and construct parking area.	2019	A	\$250,000	*General *AYSO *MDNR
	Pickleball Court -	2019	A	\$20,000	*General
Harper Avenue	Install signage	2023	E	\$1,000	*GENERAL
	Install picnic tables and benches along rivers edge	2023	E	6,000	*MDEQ *MDNR

Table 8: Program Costs by Year

Year	Estimated Project Cost
2019	\$
2020	\$
2021	\$
2022	\$
2023	\$
Total	\$

Status Report for all Grant-Assisted Parks and Recreation Facilities

Township of Watervliet

TF93-064	1993	Canoe Trail Acquisition	\$10,500	Withdrawn
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SUMMARY

In summary, the Township wants to maintain/expand and enhance the current and future parks system to improve the quality of life for present and future generations. Overall, the community is trying to provide total access to the Township for all persons with all abilities. The trail component of this plan directly correlates with the “*Connecting Michigan – A Statewide Trailways Vision and Action Plan*” which was formed through a collaborative effort of many trail related organizations and governmental entities under the umbrella of the Michigan Trails and Greenway Alliance. These trail initiatives tout the economic, health, recreational and transportation benefits of trail systems and the need for connectivity among existing trail segments and entities. The Township desires to provide linkages and integration of non-motorized trail opportunities into regional transportation planning and serves as one way of achieving the trail goal including the Safe Routes to Schools Program of the Governor’s Council on Physical Fitness, in cooperation with Michigan Department of Transportation and the Berrien County Road Commission.

The Township is cognizant that environmental quality is the foundation on which all outdoor recreation is built. A healthy, productive environment sustains living resources such as fish, wildlife and plants and provides an attractive environment for leisure-time activities. It also is central to the MDNR's legal mandate to "protect and conserve the natural resources of the state.”

Finally, the Township is dedicated to provide universal access to outdoor recreation venues to ensure all recreation and park facilities are enjoyed and utilized by people with all abilities.

Table: Facility Development Standards

Activity/Facility	Standard*	Need	Existing	Deficiency
Badminton	1/5,000	1	0	1
Basketball (Youth)	1/5,000	1	1	0
Basketball (High School)	1/5,000	1	1	0
Handball	1/20,000	-	-	-
Ice Hockey	1/100,000	-	-	-
Tennis	1/2,000	2	2	0
Volleyball	1/5,000	1	1	0
Baseball (Official)	1/5,000	1	1	0
Baseball (Little League)	1/5,000	1	1	0
Field Hockey	1/20,000	1	0	1
Football	1/20,000	1	1	0
Soccer	1/10,000	1	0	1
Golf-Driving Range	1/50,000	-	-	-
¼ Mile Running Track	1/20,000	-	-	-
Softball	1/5,000	1	1	0
Multiple Recreation Court	1/10,000	1	0	1
Trails	1 system	1	1	0
Archery Range	1/50,000	-	-	-
Skeet and Trap Field	1/50,000	-	-	-
Golf	1/25,000	-	-	-
Swimming Pools	1/20,000	-	-	-

*Based on Population and based on the private/public park amenities in the area.

** Source: Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Appendices

Maps

Notice for Public Meetings & Local Newspaper Articles

Public Meeting Minutes

Resolution of Adoption

Transmittal to County & Regional Planning Agency

Sample Survey

Facility Pictures