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Chapter 4: Needs Analysis & Public Participation

An essential task in the recreation planning process is to determine the needs of the community to formulate an action plan for parks and recreation improvement. Needs provide the rationale for goals and objectives and identify areas for capital improvements. To assess needs, consideration was given to current recreation trends and an online survey was conducted to receive opinions and desires from residents. In addition, several “pop-up sessions” took place during the summer of 2019 at various locations to receive the broadest possible level of input from community members. These varied sources of information helped to inform a strategic solution to meet Berkley’s recreation needs.

Comparison to National Standards

According to a 1996 National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) study, parks and open spaces are categorized as mini-parks, neighborhood parks, community parks, regional parks, and preserves. The mini, neighborhood, and community parks are the close-to-home parks, designed to satisfy the recreational needs of local communities within a service radius of up to two miles. Berkley’s parks are considered close-to-home parks. According to NRPA standards, the amount of recommended close-to-home park land is 6.25 to 10.5 acres for every 1,000 residents.

Regional parks are parks that serve a broader area (one hour drive or about a 45 mile radius) than community parks and focus on meeting the recreation needs of the region as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. For Berkley, County, State, and HCMA parks fill this role. The NRPA standard for regional parks is 15 to 20 acres of park land per 1,000 people.

Other types of parks include the following:

- Schoolyards, areas that can fulfill the space requirements for other types of parks such as neighborhood, community, sports complex or special use which include the public school facilities located near the City;
- Greenways, areas that link parks together to form a continuous park environment such as the multi-purpose pathway included in the City; and
- Private recreation facilities, areas that are privately owned yet contribute to the City parks and recreation system.

According to these standards, local parks fall within the range for recommended acreage for close-to-home park land. Using numbers based on population estimates for 2045, the amount of existing parkland should continue to be adequate to meet the City’s recreation needs. Acreage provided by schools and private facilities further help meet resident recreation requirements. Berkley residents are especially well-served by regional park facilities provided by the state and other recreation providers, despite the fact that no regional parks are actually located in the City’s borders.

Table 3. Parkland Acreage Standards

Type of Park	NRPA standard per 1000 population	Required - City based on 2020 population of 14,592	Existing	Deficiency / Surplus
Close-to-Home Parkland & Greenways	6.26 - 10.5 acres	27 to 45 acres	30.6 acres	+4 acres
Subdivision Parks	-	-	28 acres	-
Nearby Parks - Royal Oak, Huntington Woods, Oak Park, Southfield	-	-	961.3 acres	-
Regional Parks	15 - 20 acres	65 to 87 acres	27,000 acres	+26,935 acres
Schoolyards	-	-	400 acres	-
Private Recreation Facilities	-	-	996 acres	-

NRPA Metrics

Recognizing that a “one size fits all” approach to park planning is not practical for most communities, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) annually releases a set of park metrics which allow community planners to compare their facilities with those found in similarly sized communities. The list of amenities described in the 2019 report is by no means exhaustive, but it offers a starting point for Berkley to consider as it looks toward the future park development.

The report describes the average number of facilities provided for communities ranging from small (under 20,000) to large (more than 250,000 residents). These comparisons are summarized in Table 4. Berkley compares fairly well to its peers, falling above the median for miles of trails provided and number of residents served per park, but falling short of the median in terms of acres of parkland per thousand residents.

The report further describes specific outdoor and indoor recreation facilities for communities based on the number of residents per square mile. This comparison can be seen in Table 5 and Table 6. Where amenities are

Table 4. Park Facility Comparison for Communities with Less Than 20,000 Residents

Amenity	Berkley	Median	Lower Quartile	Upper Quartile
Miles of trails	4 miles	n/a	n/a	n/a
Number of residents per park	1,433	1,231	1,985	788
Acres of parkland per thousand residents	7.1	11.8	5.3	18.9

Source: NRPA Park Metrics Report, 2019

Table 6. Indoor Park Facilities for Communities with Greater than 2,500 residents per square mile

Amenity	% of agencies with amenity	# of residents served by amenity
Community Centers	57.9	33071
Rec Center (gyms, etc.)	56.9	34000
Senior Centers	39.9	77014
Amphitheater	32.9	85071
Nature Center	27.5	106644
Stadiums	18	97959
Ice Rink	16.3	57135
Teen Center	13.3	75000
Arena	8.7	54778

Source: NRPA Park Metrics Report, 2019

currently provided in Berkley, the City offers an above average number of facilities. Some notable amenities that are not currently available within the City park system are a dog park, soccer fields (youth & adult), community gardens, and adult baseball fields. Lack of space within the City makes adding these facilities impractical, and each of these facilities are available for resident use in surrounding communities.

Finally, the 2019 report describes typical programming options, providing the percentage of communities offering programs in a variety of categories. While Berkley offers several community-wide events throughout the year, it does not provide any other forms of recreation programming. Typical program types and the percentage of communities offering these programs is provided in Table 7 and Table 8.

Table 5. Outdoor Park Amenities for Communities with Greater than 2,500 residents per square mile

Amenity	% of agencies with amenity	# per 1000 Berkley	# per 1000 Average
Playgrounds	94.4	0.47	0.32
Basketball courts	86.1	0.93	0.14
Tennis courts	79.7	0.47	0.21
Baseball - youth	77.9	0.70	0.14
Softball - adult	66.5	0.70	0.07
Multi-purpose fields	66.1	0.23	0.11
Softball - youth	60.9	0.70	0.07
Dog park	59.3	0.00	0.02
Baseball - adult	54.7	0.00	0.04
Pool (outdoor)	52.3	0.00	0.02
Tot lot	48.1	0.23	0.09
Soccer field - youth	48.1	0.00	0.11
Community garden	46.3	0.00	0.03
Basketball/volleyball	42	0.23	0.06
Soccer field - adult	40.9	0.00	0.07
Football field	38	0.00	0.03
Skate park	26.2	0.00	0.02
Synthetic field	19.1	0.00	0.02
Ice rink (outdoor)	16.7	0.00	0.03
Lacrosse field	11.7	0.00	0.03
Cricket field	9.2	0.00	0.01
Overlay field	7.5	0.00	0.05
Field hockey field	4	0.00	0.02

Source: NRPA Park Metrics Report, 2019



Table 7. Typical Program Offerings - All Agencies

Programs Offered	% of agencies with program
Themed special events	87
Team sports	87
Social recreation	86
Health & Wellness	80
Fitness enhancement	79
Individual sports	72
Safety training	71
Aquatics	71
Racquet sports	66
Trips and tours	62
Performing arts	61
Cultural crafts	60
Martial arts	60
Virtual arts	57
Natural/Cultural History	55
Golf	48
Running/cycling races	20

Source: NRPA Park Metrics Report, 2019

Table 8. Targeted programs for children, seniors, and people with disabilities in communities with less than 20,000 residents

Programs Offered	% of agencies with program
Summer camp	60.8
Specific senior programs	67.5
Specific teen programs	50.3
Programs for people w disabilities	30.5
After-school programs	46.8
Preschool	27.2
Before-school programs	14.7
Full daycare	3.4

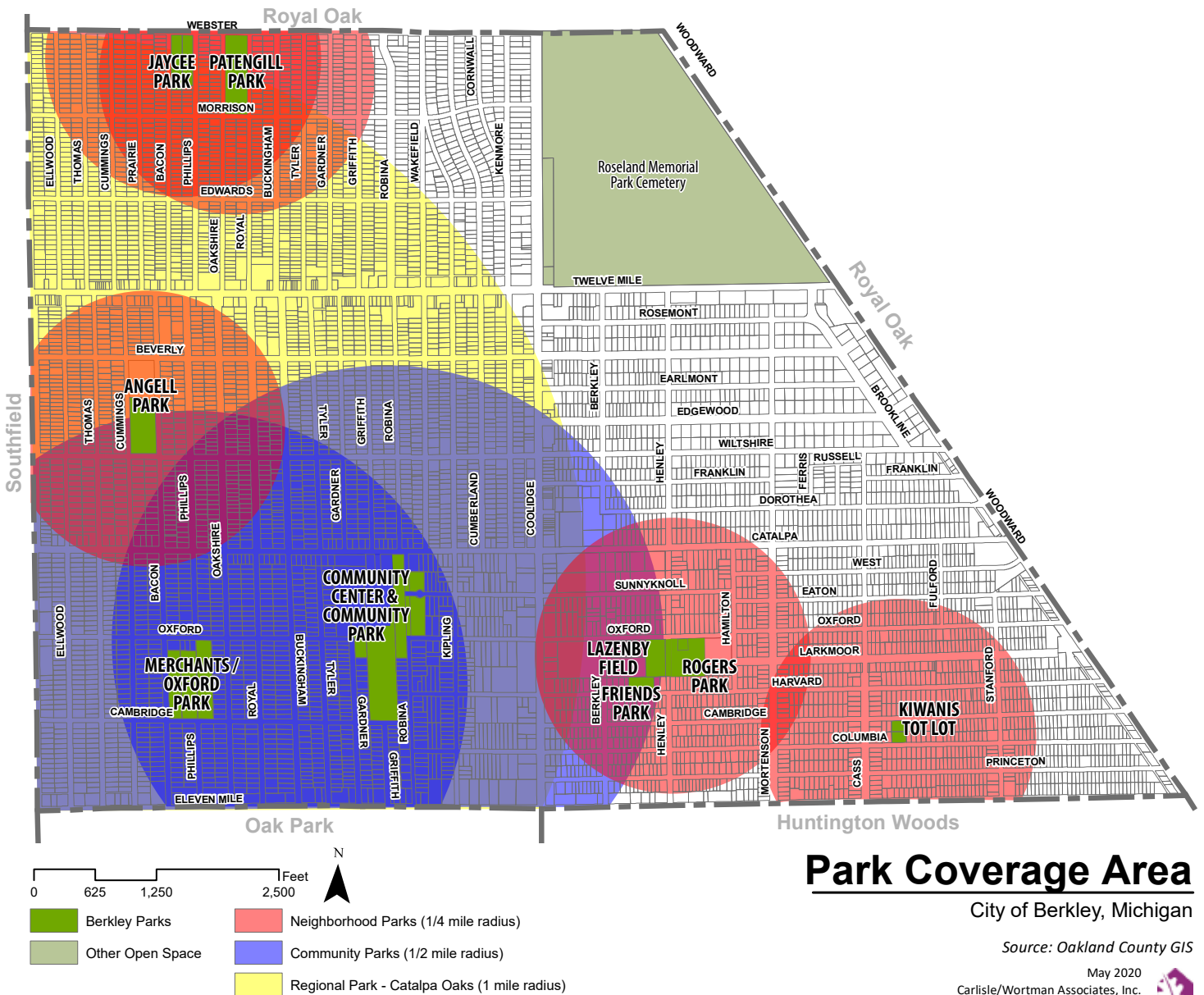
Source: NRPA Park Metrics Report, 2019

Ten Minute Walk Initiative

The NRPA, Trust for Public Land (TPL), other recreation advocacy groups, and communities across the country have embraced the concept of the “ten minute walk”, or the idea that every American should be within walkable distance to a local park or recreation facility. Numerous studies have shown the psychological, health, and general quality of life benefits provided by improved access to green spaces, but the likelihood of utilizing these spaces decreases as distance to the facility increases. For planning purposes, the traditional NRPA service radius of 1/4 mile for neighborhood parks and 1/2 mile for community parks is frequently used to demonstrate the effective reach of park systems.

As shown in Map 1, Berkley residents have good access to local recreation facilities on the south and west sides of the City, but are somewhat underserved on the northeast side. Incorporating neighboring community park service areas strengthens the coverage along Eleven Mile and Webster Roads, but still does improve coverage on the eastern side of the City. Development of a linear park along the southern edge of Roseland Cemetery or a pocket park near the intersection of Edgewood Boulevard and Woodward Avenue would help to correct these deficiencies.

Map 1. Local Park Coverage Areas



National Recreation Trends

Recreation trends on a national and regional level provide insights into activities that show the greatest growth in popularity and may affect the future direction of parks and recreation. The National Sporting Goods Association (NSGA) regularly conducts national surveys to measure participation in physical activities and track changes from previous years. Table 9 lists the top seven outdoor activities persons aged seven years and older participated in at least once in 2016.

Table 9. Top Outdoor Activities - 2016

Activity	Participation (National)	Overall Rank	Participation (East North Central Region)	Overall Rank
Exercise walking	106.3 million	1	15.4 million	1
Swimming	46.3 million	3	6.3 million	7
Running / jogging	44.5 million	5	6.2 million	8
Hiking	42.0 million	6	5.3 million	12
Camping	40.1 million	7	6.4 million	5
Bicycle riding	36.0 million	9	5.8 million	9
Fishing	29.5 million	13	5.4 million	10

Source: NSGA Sports Participation in the United States 2016

The 2016 study shows a continued trend towards individual-based outdoor activities, with open water sports, outdoor activities, and snow sports all showing increases in participation. Team related sports, with the exception of soccer and lacrosse, have showed a steady decline in popularity in recent years, while trail related sports continue to grow in popularity. The top growing outdoor activities between 2006 and 2016 were exercise walking (87.5 to 106.3 million), running/jogging (28.8 to 44.5 million), hiking (31.0 to 42.2 million) and kayaking (5.9 to 9.2 million).

Table 11. Outdoor Recreation Activities - Children under 18

Activity	Participation Rate
Visit parks or playgrounds	85%
Swimming outdoors	76%
Sledding/tubing	54%
Fishing	52%
Non-league team or individual sports	46%
Team or individual sports in a league	44%
Road biking	41%

Source: Michigan Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

These trends are consistent with those observed in Michigan. According to a survey of Michigan residents conducted as part of the 2018-2022 Michigan Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, walking outdoors was identified as the most important outdoor activity by 26 percent of users statewide. A list of participation rates for the most popular activities is listed in Table 10 below. Participation rates for children under age 18 is provided in Table 11.

Table 10. Top Outdoor Recreation Activities in Michigan

Activity	Participation Rate
Relaxing outdoors	75%
Walking outdoors, including dog walking	74%
Visit parks or playgrounds	67%
Sightseeing and/or driving for pleasure	64%
Visiting nature centers or historic sites	56%
Swimming outdoors	54%
Picnicking	53%
Fishing	41%
Biking of any kind (on or off road)	40%
Camping of any kind (modern, RV, tent, rustic)	39%
Team or individual sports outdoors	37%
Wildlife viewing and/or photography including birding	36%
Hiking/backpacking	34%
Jogging/running	34%
Canoeing, kayaking, stand-up paddle boarding, or wind surfing	32%
Road biking	31%
Motor boating	31%
Sledding/tubing	30%
Tent or rustic camping	30%
Shooting sports, including archery	30%
Modern or RV camping	25%
Hunting of any kind	20%

Source: Michigan Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan

Some key findings from the Metro Detroit region include:

- Nearly 75 percent of residents feel that outdoor recreation is very important or moderately important to their household.
- Walking outdoors, including dog walking, was identified as the most important outdoor activity.
- 87 percent of participants went outside 52 or more days per year, with nearly 54 percent doing so for more than 100 days.

Monitoring parks and recreation trends is important in determining how parks and recreation services should evolve. The implication of the trends noted above along with the demographic and physical characteristics of the area can be summarized as follows:

- While future recreation facility development should respond to the expected increase in seniors, developments should be designed to accommodate a variety of abilities and interests. Meeting or exceeding ADA standards for recreation uses will be critical.
- There is a need for more walk/bike ways to accommodate bicycle and pedestrian recreation use and to contribute to a healthy and walkable environment. The City should make efforts to connect with existing regional hike/bike systems in surrounding communities and facilities.



Public Input

The COVID-19 pandemic posed enormous challenges to recreation services around the world, and forced communities to find creative solutions which would allow service providers to stay in touch with residents even as parks and other facilities remained closed to the public. For Berkley, developing a recreation plan during the outbreak meant forgoing the traditional face-to-face community meetings and instead relying on “virtual” outreach methods to receive resident input. The Parks & Recreation Department made a concerted effort to be as inclusive as possible, holding meetings with a variety of stakeholders through the process and offering an online survey to gauge community interest.

In total, five virtual meetings were held during the months of July and August. Each meeting focused on a different topic to ensure that a variety of viewpoints were considered. The meeting dates and topics were as follows:

- July 15 - General recreation focus group
- July 16 - Sports leagues and facilities focus group
- July 23 - Senior focus group
- July 28 - Parks staff input
- August 6 - Community-wide open house

In addition to the virtual meetings, an online survey was offered from July 14 through August 14, 2020. Hard copies of the survey were available to residents upon request. The survey was advertised on the city’s social media platforms and in the local newspaper. An article was written by the paper detailing the planning process and highlighting the survey. Copies of the advertisements are included in Appendix A. Raw data and summaries of the meetings and survey are provided in Appendix F.

Generally speaking, the information gathered from the survey mirrored the information gathered from the community input meetings. 97% of survey respondents were Berkley residents. Almost all (98%) lived in single family homes. Of the 450 households who responded to the survey, over half (53%) had children under the age of 18 at home. The high number of families with children was anecdotally noted by several residents during the virtual meetings. Their experience and the survey results are validated by American Community Survey (ACS) estimates which show the median age in Berkley trending younger.

The survey participants tended to be active; almost 80% of participants walk, jog, or cycle for exercise, with 49% indicating they do so daily. Over 60% residents stated that they participate in Parks & Recreation programs, and participate in outdoor park and playground activities. 85% visit neighboring community, county, or state parks on a regular basis.

Berkley residents are highly invested in the welfare of the park system and, while generally happy with the recreation services provided, recognize that there is room for improvement. Angell Park was the most frequently visited park, with almost 21% stating they visit the park at least once per week. Lazenby Field was the least visited facility, with just over 3% using the facility once per week. Active park visitors (i.e. eliminating responses where the respondent stated they had not visited a facility) provided high overall satisfaction rates for most of Berkley’s parks. Greater than 80% of respondents were “satisfied” or “very satisfied” with five of the Berkley parks (Angell, Jaycee, Kiwanis, Pattengill, and Rogers). Two parks (Community and Lazenby Field) had 70% or greater satisfaction rates, while another two (Merchants/Oxford and Friends) were around 65%. The Community Center received low marks, however, with only 34% satisfied or very satisfied. A discussion of the Community Center is provided on the following pages.

Participants were complimentary of Parks & Recreation Department staff, appreciating their responsiveness to resident concerns and staff’s genuine concern about their patrons. Primary areas of concern were the physical state of Berkley’s recreation facilities, including the city’s playgrounds and the Berkley Community Center.

The Staff is amazing! All very caring and valuable employees.

Our parks need a well deserved facelift. P&R & Public Works have done an outstanding job at maintaining what we have.

Maintenance and development of existing parks was by far the top priority for residents. Over 96% of residents identified ongoing maintenance as “important” or “very important”. 86% of residents indicated that they would support a bond or millage at some level for maintaining and developing Berkley parks. Maintaining existing programs and events was also viewed as important (76%), but there was interest in developing new programming as well (78%). There was much less call for acquiring and developing new parks (52%); 66% of survey respondents felt the city has “the right amount of parks”, although participants in the online meetings did indicate interest in pocket and linear parks in strategic locations. 73% of residents also indicated a desire to see sidewalks and trails developed throughout the city. Trails are discussed in more detail on page 27.

Several residents requested new playground equipment in area parks. New equipment has recently been installed at Pattengill and Rogers playgrounds, while the Angell Park play facility was replaced in 2016. Merchants/Oxford Park is slated to be completely renovated with new play equipment, permanent bathrooms, and a splash pad. Play equipment was installed in the fall of 2020 and overall construction should be completed by spring 2021. New equipment is planned for Kiwanis Tot Lot in spring 2021, Community Park in fall 2021/spring 2022, and Jaycee Park in spring 2022/fall 2023.

Accessibility, inclusivity, and diversity were discussion points at least three of the community meetings. Ann Arbor’s Gallup Park, a universally accessible facility opened in 2017, was mentioned by both residents and staff as a model for park development in Berkley. Residents noted the importance of providing play equipment that meets the needs of children across a variety of ages and abilities, but also stressed the importance of providing amenities that accommodated parents, grandparents, and other visitors as well. Shade structures, trees, bathrooms, and benches were frequently mentioned in the survey.

My visually impaired daughter uses a cane and most parks are not accessible to her. There is no way she can maneuver the sidewalk at JayCee Park. We would like to see park equipment that is inclusive to all people. It’s difficult to even find a swing she can use at most of these parks.

Please work to ensure art, music, class, and food options are inclusive of the diverse demographics (cultures) which reside in the community.

The parks can use more shade near the play equipment. There have been several times I took my kids to the park in the middle of a summer day and had to leave because the playground equipment was too hot.

Please consider something for the neighborhood north of Catalpa and east of Coolidge....or bring back crossing lanes so we can access Berkley’s amenities on foot. It’s the only pocket of Berkley without a park or other recreation options and crossing Coolidge on foot is not safe with kids.

By far the most discussed topic, however, was development of a new Berkley Community Center. A bond proposal to construct a new facility was narrowly defeated in 2018 (4,500 “no” votes to 4,352 “yes” votes) and remains a contentious issue for many residents. According to city engineers, revamping the existing building to meet ADA standards while providing the desired amenities would be cost prohibitive. In all of the virtual meetings, participants suggested that the current building is inadequate to meet the programming needs of the community. The removal of the ice arena eliminated valuable indoor practice space for the local sports teams, and removed a large event space for other community events. The current building configuration is unable to accommodate all of the groups looking to use the center for meetings, and even those who still use the space suggested that the available meeting rooms are cramped and incapable of holding larger gatherings.

Over 66% of survey participants indicated that they would support a 1.25 mill bond to finance the construction of a new community center. In the virtual focus groups and community meeting, support for a new center was essentially unanimous. Participants indicated that any development will require a major community outreach effort and a clear designation of the amenities that will be included. Some felt that the previous bond effort may have failed because residents felt that certain amenities were requested but not included in the final facility concept. Several survey respondents noted that any proposed facilities should be of an “appropriate scale” for the community.

Flexibility of uses was frequently mentioned as a critical component of any new community center. Several residents suggested a central gymnasium with basketball courts that could be divided into multiple spaces for a variety of uses. Large meeting rooms could be similarly designed with dividers to allow a variety of uses.

While flexibility of general gathering spaces was considered important, participants also noted a need for dedicated spaces for both seniors and teens. Staff and residents cited the success of teen events held at the former ice arena site; high turnout at those events showed a clear need for expanded programming options and safe gathering places for teens. Similarly, both staff and the general public stressed the importance of providing adequate storage and office space for Park Department usage.

Features mentioned in the survey and in the virtual meetings included an indoor running track, exercise equipment, and trophy cases for the community sports teams. The exterior space was viewed as an opportunity to create a community gathering space. Suggestions included constructions of a sunken amphitheater that could be flooded and used for ice skating in winter months, and positioned as a seating area for movies-in-the-park in summer months.

One frequently mentioned feature was inclusion of a community pool. Pools present challenges for recreation departments. They are extremely expensive to build and require extensive ongoing maintenance. Staffing can be especially problematic; communities across the state, including in nearby Huntington Woods, have difficulty retaining lifeguards during the summer months when student lifeguards are generally available, and find it even more difficult in winter months when those same lifeguards are back in school. It is recommended that rather than building a new pool, the city looks to partner with neighboring communities, the Berkley School District, or Oakland County to provide Berkley residents access to swimming facilities.

Appendix G includes a rough concept layout for a new community center. The financial figures on the sheet can give the city a starting point for design discussions with residents. If Berkley decides to move forward with development of a new center, it will require significant community input, clear, unambiguous guidance as to desired amenities, and a solid financial plan for both construction and ongoing operation. The city should also evaluate options for construction of a facility in a different location. There are a limited number of prominently located sites that could potentially be used for recreation purposes either through adaptation of the existing facility or by a complete rebuild.

We need a new community center. Ours is in bad shape and will not hold a large group comfortably. For example Taste of Berkley. As a result I just do not go.

My support above absolutely depends on what is being proposed. The last proposal didn't feel like it was created for Berkley, but from a random set of plans, saying "you need this".

Aside from the Community Center and playground equipment, trails and sidewalks were probably the most popular recreation amenity requested by residents. As mentioned earlier, 73% of residents indicated a desire to see the development of a community-wide trail or sidewalk network. While 62% of survey participants indicated that they would typically drive to local parks, 48% of residents often chose to bicycle to the facilities, while 71% walked. Almost 80% of residents regularly participated in walking and trail sports, and 64% participated in street or casual biking. In questions regarding visitation to regional parks, access to large trail networks was frequently mentioned as a prime reason for visiting the facility. 60% of participants stated that they would like to see more multi-use walking and biking paths developed in the city, while over 80% indicated that they would like to see Berkley cooperate with surrounding communities to develop an inter-city trail network. While connectivity between parks and development of intra-park routes was viewed as important, participants noted that internal park trails are regularly used for exercise by residents and that further development of the latter style of pathways would be welcomed.

No specific roads/routes, but it would be fun to have a painted line that runs through all the different Berkley parks. Connecting them to one another so a running/biker can follow that line and hit up all the parks.

Adding a dog park to the community was frequently mentioned in the open-ended questions. Berkley ordinances currently prohibit dogs in city parks, and the closest dog park available to residents is located in the Red Oaks County Park in Madison Heights, roughly a 20 minute drive from Berkley. While constructing a simple dog park is relatively low cost, finding an appropriate site can be challenging. Safety, noise, and sanitation concerns are frequently mentioned issues, and for those reasons, communities typically place dog parks away from residential areas. This is problematic in Berkley as all of the city's parks are in residential neighborhoods.

They city may wish to consider partnering with Oakland County Parks to develop a dog park on the east side of Catalpa Oaks County Park. The ambient noise from Greenfield Road would reduce noise concerns, and the county's expertise in operating dog parks would make them well suited to host a facility in this location.

While not as frequently discussed as some of the other issues, programming is still highly valued by residents. Over 60% of survey respondents participated in Berkley Parks & Recreation programming. 74% of respondents felt that fees charged for programming were about right. Overall satisfaction levels varied depending on the targeted age group. Youth activities (75%) and special events (79%) were very highly rated, while senior programs saw a respectable 65% satisfaction rate. Adult programming was relatively low at 57%.

Lack of program variety was the primary complaint. Participants requested new programs for all age groups; teens, senior, and adult activities all received multiple mentions. Timing of programs was also a challenge for some residents, especially for school-age programs. Several participants mentioned the lack of available facilities for programs, and specifically mentioned the community center as being inadequate for many activities.

Public Review and Public Hearing

A draft plan was reviewed by the Steering Committee and later by the Parks & Recreation Advisory Board. The Board considered input received through the survey and reviewed the recreation trends, deficiencies, and other background information to establish the master plan goals and an action program for implementation. This was done virtually at their regular public meeting on October 8, 2020.

The plan was then made available for public review beginning on October 9 through November 11, 2020. Because of COVID-19 concerns, hard copies were only available on a limited basis at City Hall and the Community Center. The plan was also available online on the City of Berkley website. The plan's availability for public review was advertised via social media, on the city website, and in C&G Newspapers on October 1, 2020 (see Appendix A). Public input into the plan culminated in an advertised public hearing and subsequent adoption by City Council on December 21, 2020.