



Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan 2022-2026

City of Big Rapids, Michigan
ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 20, 2021



Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan 2022-2026

City of Big Rapids, Michigan
ADOPTED ON DECEMBER 20, 2021

Prepared with the assistance of:
Emily Szymanski, Planning & Zoning Technician

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you

The participation and cooperation of community leaders and residents in the preparation of the 2022 Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan is greatly appreciated and we thank everyone who participated in its development. The content of this Plan reflects the ongoing collaboration between City residents, stakeholders, Parks and Recreation Board, and City Commission.

In particular, we acknowledge the efforts of:

CITY COMMISSION

Jennifer Cochran - City Commissioner
Jonathon Eppley - City Commissioner
Robert Andrews - City Commissioner
Karen Simmon - City Commissioner
Lorraine James - Former City Commissioner
Tom Hogenson - Former Mayor
Fred Guenther - Mayor

PARKS AND RECREATION BOARD

Deborah Chipman - Chair
Scott Herron - Co-Chair
Foster Neill - Board Member
Mark Brejcha - Board Member
Vicky Deur - Board Member
Margaret Maynard - Board Member
John Sparks - Board Member
Sandy Gholston - Board Member
Jennifer Yontz - Board Member

PLANNING COMMISSION

Chris Jane - Chair
Megan Eppley - Co-Chair
Sarah Montgomery - Secretary
Rory Ruddick - Planning Commissioner
Kasey Thompson - Planning Commissioner
Jacob Buse - Planning Commissioner

CITY ADMINISTRATION

Mark Gifford - City Manager
Heather Bowman - Public Works Director
Josh Pyles - Parks and Recreation Coordinator
Trina Poulos - Administrative Assistant - Public Works

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

A Plan for an Engaged Community iii

Planning Processiv

1. Community Description 1

Regional Setting2

A Brief History of Big Rapids2

Demographic and Housing Characteristics4

Projections8

Physical Characteristics10

Community Description and Parks and Recreation Planning12

2. Administrative Structure and Funding13

Administration14

Parks and Recreation Funding and Grant History16

3. Parks, Recreation, and Facility Inventory19

City Parks22

City Parks and Facilities by Type in Big Rapids23

Additional Recreational Facilities38

Regional Facilities41

Inventory of Existing Recreational Boating Facilities42

Universal Access43

4. Basis for Action Plan45

Planning Process46

Survey Results47

Community Workshop Findings47

5. Action Plan49

Parks and Recreation Goals and Objectives51

System-Wide Recommendations53

Six-Year Capital Improvement Program54

Action Plan Items55

Priority Projects for the Next Five Years58

Appendices59

A - Funding Sources

B - Resolutions

C - Minutes

D - Public Comments

E - Survey Results

F - Community Workshop Findings

LIST OF MAPS

Map 1: Regional Location	3
Map 2: Land Use for the City of Big Rapids	11
Map 3: Existing Park and Recreation Facilities	21
Map 4: Park Service Areas - 1/4 Mile Walkability	37

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Population, 2019	4
Table 2: Average Household Size, 2010-2019	5
Table 3: Tenure in Occupied Units, 2019	7
Table 4: Total Population, 2030 Projection.....	8
Table 5: Big Rapids Age and Gender Distribution, 2030 Projection.....	8
Table 6: Big Rapids Housing Data, 2019-2030.....	9
Table 7: Housing Types Projections	9
Table 8: Land Use in Big Rapids	10
Table 9: 2021-2022 Recreation Expenditures.....	16
Table 10: Parks and Recreation Grant History	17
Table 11: Boat Access Sites in Mecosta County	42
Table 12: ADA Accessibility Ranking of City Parks	44

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Planning Process	iv
Figure 2: Population Change, 2010-2019	4
Figure 3: Change in the Number of Households, 2010-2019	5
Figure 4: Median Age, 2019	6
Figure 5: Age Structure, 2019	6
Figure 6: Tenure in Occupied Units, 2019	7
Figure 7: Administrative Structure	15



INTRODUCTION

A Plan for an Engaged Community

The City of Big Rapids has accomplished several important projects since the adoption of the 2015 Parks and Recreation Plan. A comprehensive list of the City's Parks and Recreation accomplishments can be found in Chapter 5, "Action Plan", within the Capital Improvements Program.

This document, the City of Big Rapids' 2021-2026 Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan, sets forth a vision for Big Rapids' parks and recreation facilities: their operations, maintenance, and enhancements for the next five years. It serves as a roadmap for future recreation facilities and programs by considering existing parks and programs in and around the City and the anticipated demand for additional or improved recreation facilities.

This Plan also forms the basis for potential recreation grant funding from the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) and other agencies and foundations. Big Rapids' Plan was prepared in accordance with MDNR's November 2020 Guidelines for the Development of Community Park and Recreation Plans.

Most importantly, this Plan will act as Big Rapids' guide for community building as it relates to parks and recreation over the next five years.

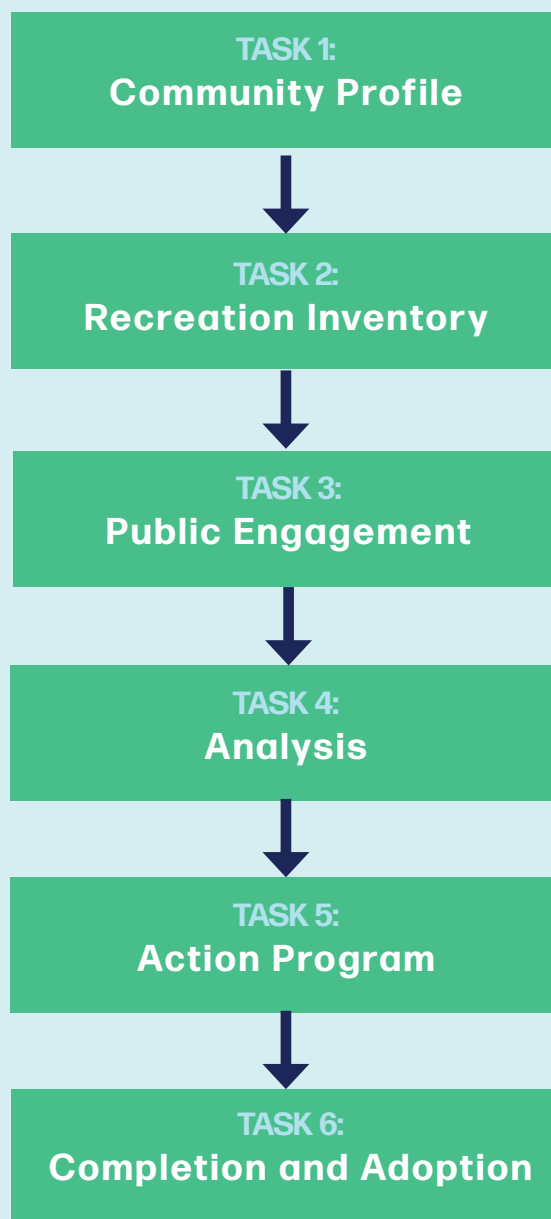
Planning Process

The Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan was prepared with assistance from the City's Planning and Zoning Technician, Emily Szymanski, and with the active involvement of the City's administration, staff, and the Big Rapids Parks and Recreation Board and the City Commission.

Citizen input and action, through a Parks & Rec 5-Year Plan Survey, a Community Workshop, and a public hearing, played a critical role in the development of the plan. As a result, recommendations described within the Action Plan reflect the needs and ideas of those who use Big Rapids' Parks and Recreation facilities.

Following discussions and a draft review by the Parks and Recreation Board and staff, the Plan was submitted to the City Commission for adoption. Throughout the process, all meetings were open to the public. Notices were posted beforehand, as provided by the Open Meetings Act. The planning process kicked off in December 2020 with staff working through the first draft and concluded with the adoption of the plan on December 20, 2021.

Figure 1: Planning Process





CHAPTER 1

Community Description



The Community Description is a picture of the various physical and socioeconomic characteristics of Big Rapids. This information provides insight into determining future land and facility development needs for the community.

Regional Setting

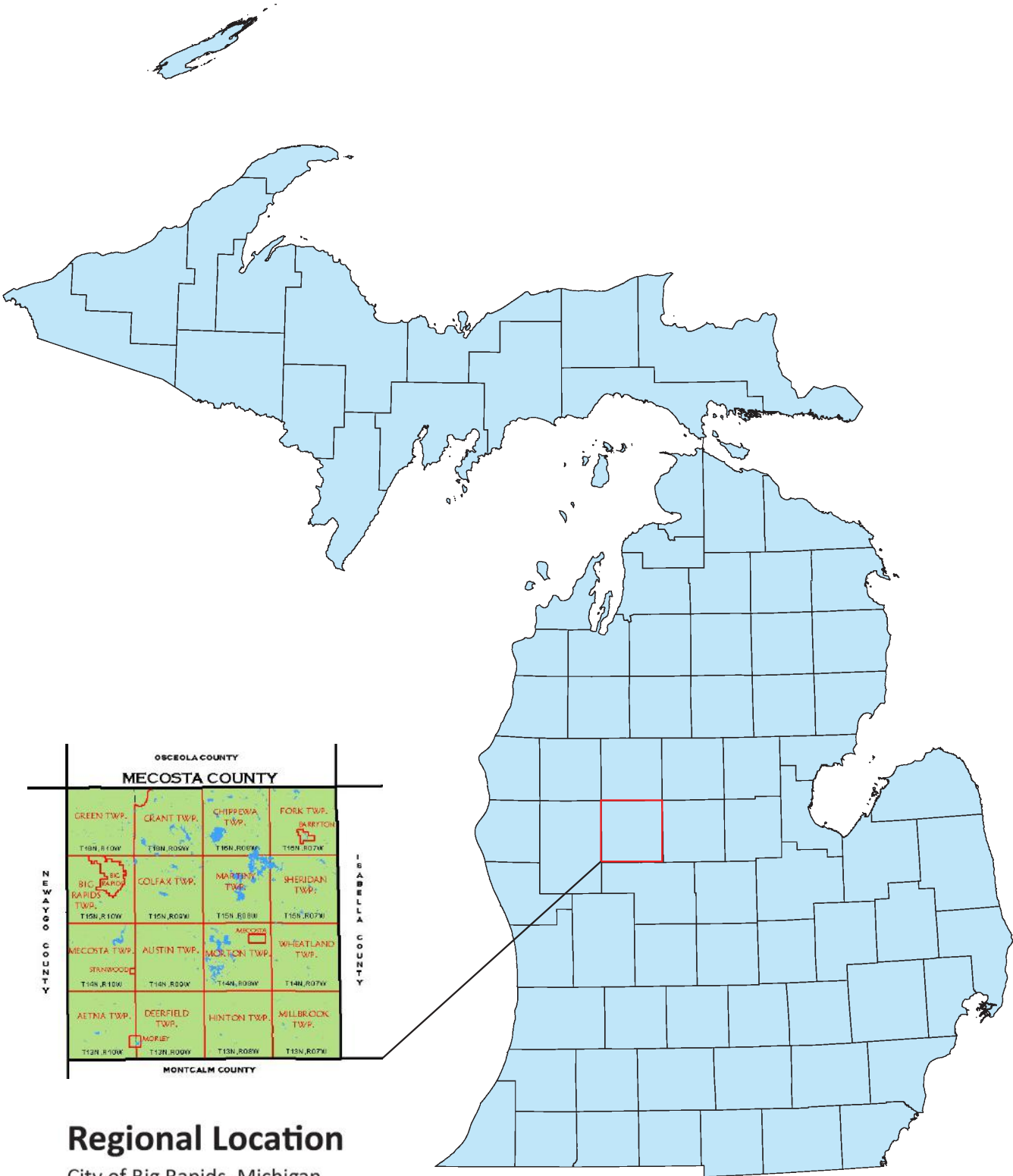
Big Rapids is the largest city within a forty-mile radius and occupies 4.56 square miles. Big Rapids is located in northwestern Mecosta County and is the County Seat. The City is home to Ferris State University, a public research university and Spectrum Health Big Rapids Hospital.

A Brief History of Big Rapids

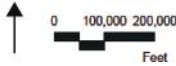
The first settlers of Big Rapids came through the area around 11,000 B.C. At that time, it was the Anishabeg people of the Three Fire Ojibway/Chippewa, Potawatomi, and Ottawa tribal groups with which the successive European French-British-American fur traders maintained economic contact between the mid 1600's to mid-1800's.

Much of the early history of Big Rapids was associated with the logging industry in the Lower Peninsula. The Muskegon River was used to transport logs downstream to the mills located in Muskegon, Michigan. The swift currents near the City's present location were referred to as "the big rapids" by lumbermen and was adopted the name of the city.

Map 1: Regional Location



Regional Location
City of Big Rapids, Michigan



Demographic and Housing Characteristics

In order to determine its parks and recreation needs, the City considered how many people will use recreational amenities, what programs they will participate in, and what types of facilities they will need. Existing conditions and past trends must be understood in order to anticipate and plan for the future needs of the community.

The data presented comes from the United States Census. The Census count occurs every ten years and the results affect community funding opportunities and congressional representation. The most recent data comes from both the 2010 Census and 2019 population estimates. Every year, billions of dollars in federal funding go to hospitals, fire departments, schools, roads, and other services based on the Census.

Population

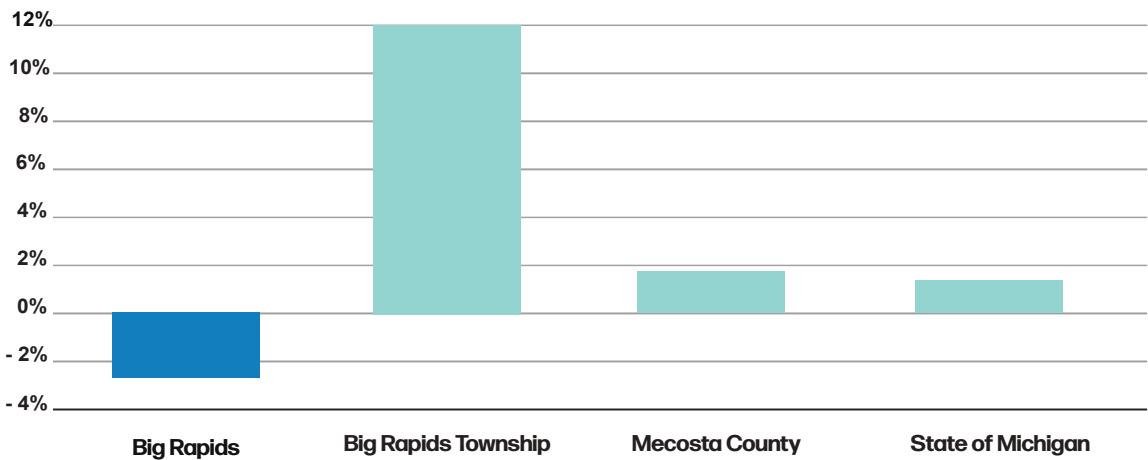
Trends in the number of people residing in a community are an important indicator for parks and recreation planning. Growing communities have different parks needs than communities with stable or declining populations. Table 1 shows the relative populations of the City of Big Rapids, Big Rapids Township, and Mecosta County, while Figure 2 compares the population trends.

Table 1: Population, 2019

	City of Big Rapids	Big Rapids Township	Mecosta County	State of Michigan
2010	10,601	4,208	42,798	9,883,640
2019	10,355	4,713	43,453	9,987,000

In comparison to the surrounding communities, the City of Big Rapids has experienced a slight decrease in its population, around -2% between 2010 and 2019. Both Big Rapids Township and Mecosta County have had an increase in population. Big Rapids Township has had a substantial increase in its population, with an increase of 12%. Projections in Big Rapids, like most communities with a university, are difficult to predict. Ferris State University’s enrollment and other factors outside of the City’s control effect the overall population. Additionally, several apartment complexes have been developed in Big Rapids Township since 2000, which influences both the population and housing projections.

Figure 2: Population Change, 2010-2019

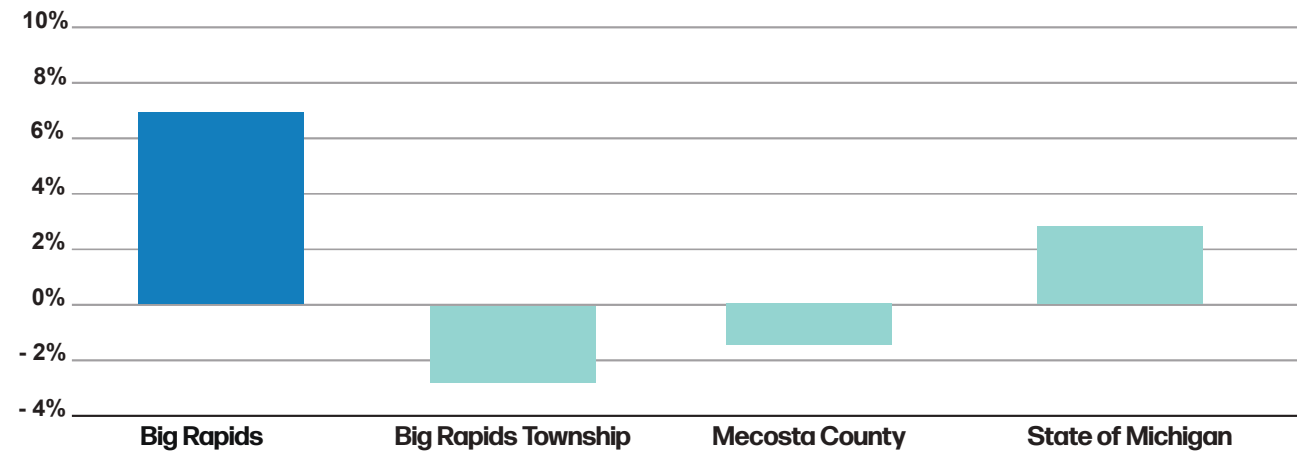


Households

This section analyzes the composition and characteristics of households in Big Rapids. Household growth has a different impact on demand for recreation services than population growth does. If the population is growing faster than the number of households, that likely means that more children are being born to existing households. If the households are growing faster than population, more single people or couples are moving into the community. Figure 3 shows that the number of households in the City of Big Rapids has increased by 6.94% (an increase of 205 households). Because the number of households is increasing when compared to the population, it indicates that Big Rapids is attracting smaller households (usually single people or young couples). Parks and recreation amenities will be a key factor in keeping these single or young couples in the city once they start having children.

Both Big Rapids Township and Mecosta County have experienced a slight decrease in household size, which indicates the people that move to the area locate in the city more so than the township and the county. The State of Michigan also saw an increase in the number of households, but still at a lower rate than the City of Big Rapids.

Figure 3: Change in the Number of Households, 2010-2019



Average household size is another indicator of community composition. Larger average household sizes generally mean more children and fewer single-parent families. Nationally, household sizes are shrinking as young singles wait longer to get married and life expectancy increases for the senior population. Table 2 compares the change in average household size since 2010 for Big Rapids, Big Rapids Township, Mecosta County, and the State of Michigan.

Between 2010 and 2019 the City of Big Rapids' household size increased from 1.98 to 2.39. Although the size increased slightly, 2.39 is still considered a smaller household size. Smaller household sizes generally mean fewer children and a greater demand for recreational programs and facilities that cater to adults and seniors. Larger household sizes mean generally more children and recreational facilities that cater to families. Big Rapids' household size increase appears to be average when compared to Big Rapids Township and Mecosta County.

Table 2: Average Household

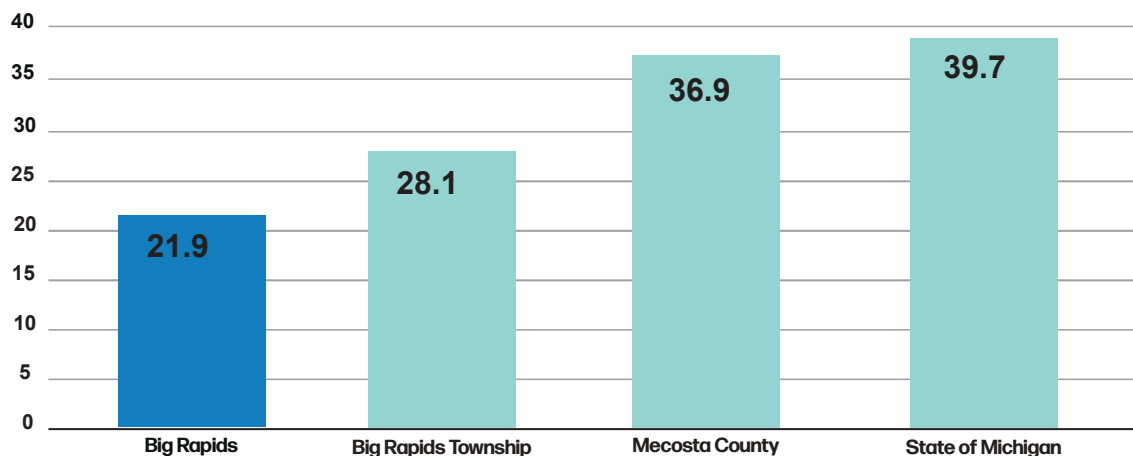
	City of Big Rapids	Big Rapids Township	Mecosta County	State of Michigan
2010	1.98	2.15	2.34	2.49
2019	2.39	2.85	2.55	2.47

Age

The age of a community's population is extremely important when planning for parks and recreation improvements. Older residents have vastly different needs than childless young adults, who have different needs and wants than families with children.

Figure 4 compares the median ages (the mid-point where half the population is younger, and half is older) of Big Rapids and the comparison communities. Residents of Big Rapids are younger than the comparison communities. When combined with the household data above, this indicates that there are a lot of young singles and couples in the City.

Figure 4: Median Age, 2019



Age structure (analyzing which proportions of a municipality's population are in which stages of life) gives a nuanced view of the makeup of a community. To compare age structure, the Census Bureau divides a given population into the following groups:

- Under 5 (Pre-School)
- 5 to 19 (School Aged)
- 20 to 44 (Family Forming)
- 45 to 64 (Mature Families)
- Over 65 (Retirement)

The following figure compares the age structure of Big Rapids with that of Mecosta County. Both the City of Big Rapids and Mecosta County have the highest percentage of residents in the school age category (5 to 19) and the family forming category (20 to 44), but the county has more residents in the mature family category (45 to 64) and the retiree group (over 65).

Figure 5: Age Structure, 2019

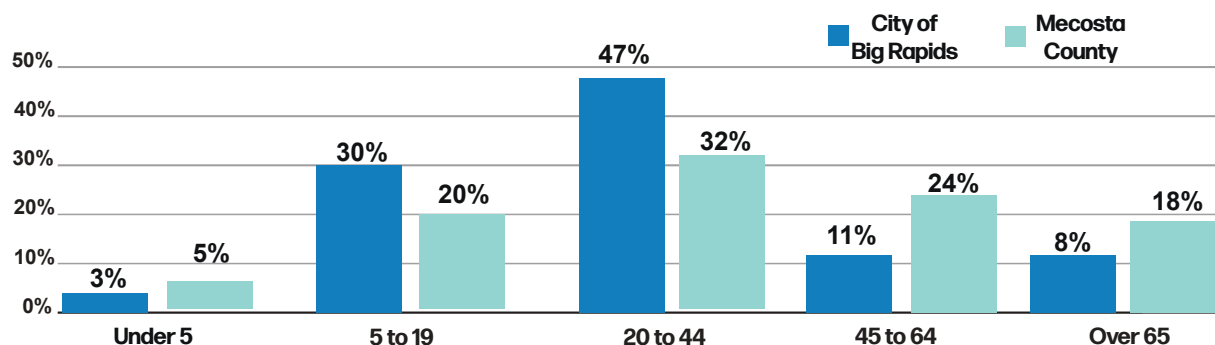




Table 3: Tenure in Occupied Units, 2019

	City of Big Rapids	Big Rapids Township	Mecosta County	State of Michigan
Owner-Occupied	36.7%	65.4%	73.3%	71.2%
Renter-Occupied	63.3%	34.6%	26.7%	28.8%

Figure 6: Tenure in Occupied Units

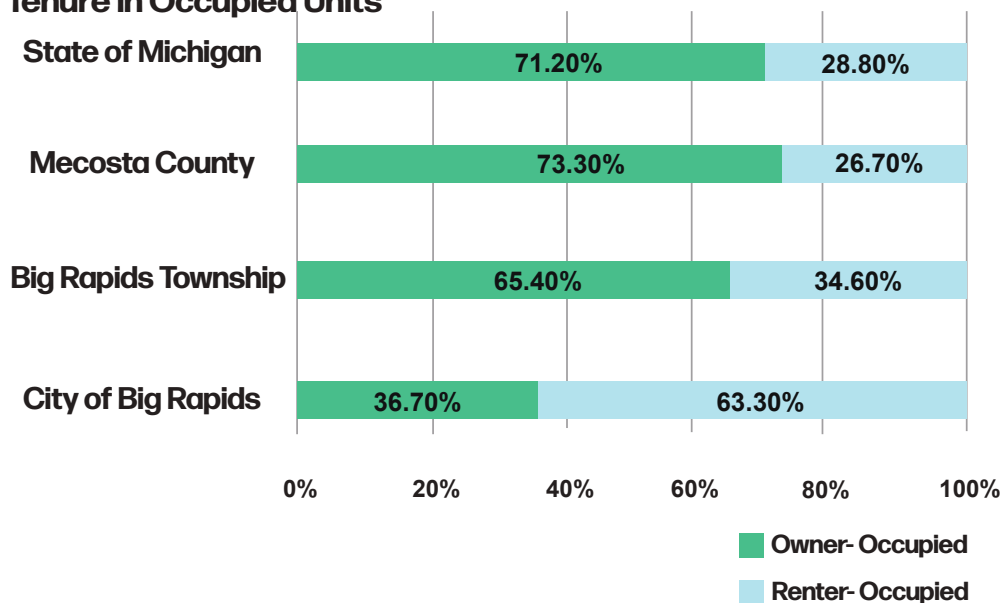


Figure 6 shows the housing tenure for the City of Big Rapids and the comparison communities. A little over 63% of Big Rapids' housing units are renter-occupied, unlike the other communities. This majority is due to the city's large college population that typically rents instead of owning homes.

Projections

The following projections predict what the population and housing characteristics of Big Rapids might look like in 2030. These projections estimate future needs of the community and services that should be planned for particularly regarding housing, jobs, retail, public services, recreation, and park space in the community over the next ten years.

Methodology

These projections are provided by the West Michigan Regional Planning Commission (WMRPC) Community Profile data generations. The community profile includes data, tables, and charts showing 2019 American Community (ACS) estimates and the WMRPC 2030 Regional Development Forecast. These are all generated specifically for the City of Big Rapids.

City of Big Rapids

As shown in Table 4, Big Rapids' population is expected to decrease over the next few years. By 2030 the population is expected to become static at around 9,309 residents.

These population projections are based on trends. Many variables can influence the trends including planning, community goals, the economy, marketing, and economic development.

Table 4: Total Population, 2030 Projection

AREA	POPULATION					CHANGE 2010-2030	
	2010	2015	2020	2025	2030	#	%
City of Big Rapids	10,601	10,278	9,995	9,632	9,309	1,292	-12.2
Big Rapids Township	4,208	4,663	5,117	5,572	6,027	1,819	43.2
Mecosta County	42,798	45,041	47,285	49,528	51,772	8,974	21.0

Source: U.S Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Table 5: Big Rapids Age and Gender Distribution, 2030 Projection

	2010		2020		2030	
	#	%	#%		#%	
Under 5	459	4.33	380	.8	335	3.6
5-17	869	8.2	740	7.47	652	.0
18-24	5,722	54.0	5,567	55.7	5,260	56.5
25-44	1,686	15.9	1,509	15.1	1,368	14.7
45-54	613	5.85	540	.4	484	5.2
55-64	568	5.4	670	6.77	680	.3
65+	684	6.4	590	5.9	531	5.7
Median Age	21.8	—	21.8	—	21.8	—
Male	5,409	51.0	5,037	50.4	4,664	50.1
Female	5,192	49.0	4,958	49.6	4,645	49.9
Total	10,601	100.0	9,995	100.0	9,309	100.0

Source: U.S Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

As shown in Table 5, Big Rapids' age distribution projection for 2030 shows the largest two age cohorts as the 18-24 and the 25-44-year-old age categories. With the population of college students, Big Rapids will most likely always have a high percentage of this age category.

Table 6: Big Rapids Housing Data, 2019-2030

	2010		2020		2030	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Total Housing Units	3,623	100.0	3,420	100.0	3,219	100.0
Occupied	3,330	91.9	3,130	91.5	2,939	91.3
Vacant	293	8.1	290	8.5	280	8.7

Source: U.S Census of Population; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Table 6 shows total housing units projected to 2030. Housing units are expected to decrease as the city's population decreases. The decrease will be slowed by households decreasing in size. Vacancy rates are projected to increase. Projections indicate that between 2010 and 2030 the number of housing units will decrease to 3,219 with an occupancy rate of 91.3 percent.

Projections shown in Table 7 indicate a decreasing percentage of single-family units, decreasing from 1,404 units in 2015 (40.4 percent) to 1,226 units in 2030 (38.1 percent). Trends indicate an increase in the "2 to 4 units" category, increasing to 1,011 units. The number of units in the "5 to 9" category is projected to decrease to 296 units by 2030 and the number of units in the "10 or more" category is projected to decline. The number of mobile homes is projected to slightly decrease.

Table 7: Housing Type Projections, 2030

Housing Type	2015		2020		2030	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
1 unit	1,404	40.4	1,330	38.9	1,226	38.1
2 to 4 units	945	27.1	1,026	30.0	1,011	31.4
5 to 9 units	362	10.4	328	9.6	296	9.2
10 or more units	533	15.3	510	14.9	473	14.7
Mobile Home, Trailer or Other	234	6.7	226	6.6	212	6.6
Total Units	3,478	100.0	3,420	100.0	3,219	100.0

Source: U.S Census of Population; American Community Survey; West Michigan Regional Planning Commission

Physical Characteristics

There are several physical characteristics of the area landscape that can have an impact on the use and design of parks, recreational facilities, and recreational programs.

Climate

Big Rapids' climate plays a significant role in the parks and recreation planning for the city and surrounding area. With Big Rapids experiencing all four seasons, the park and recreation system needs to provide recreation opportunities that will support seasonal changes.

Water Resources

The Muskegon River is the predominant geologic feature in Big Rapids and flows through four miles of the city. The river's source water is Houghton Lake, Roscommon County, and empties into Lake Michigan when the water reaches the City of Muskegon. The Muskegon River covers approximately 72 acres within the city, comprising 2.5% of the city's total land area. There are several access points located in the city that provide opportunities for fishing, hiking, tubing, canoeing, and boating.

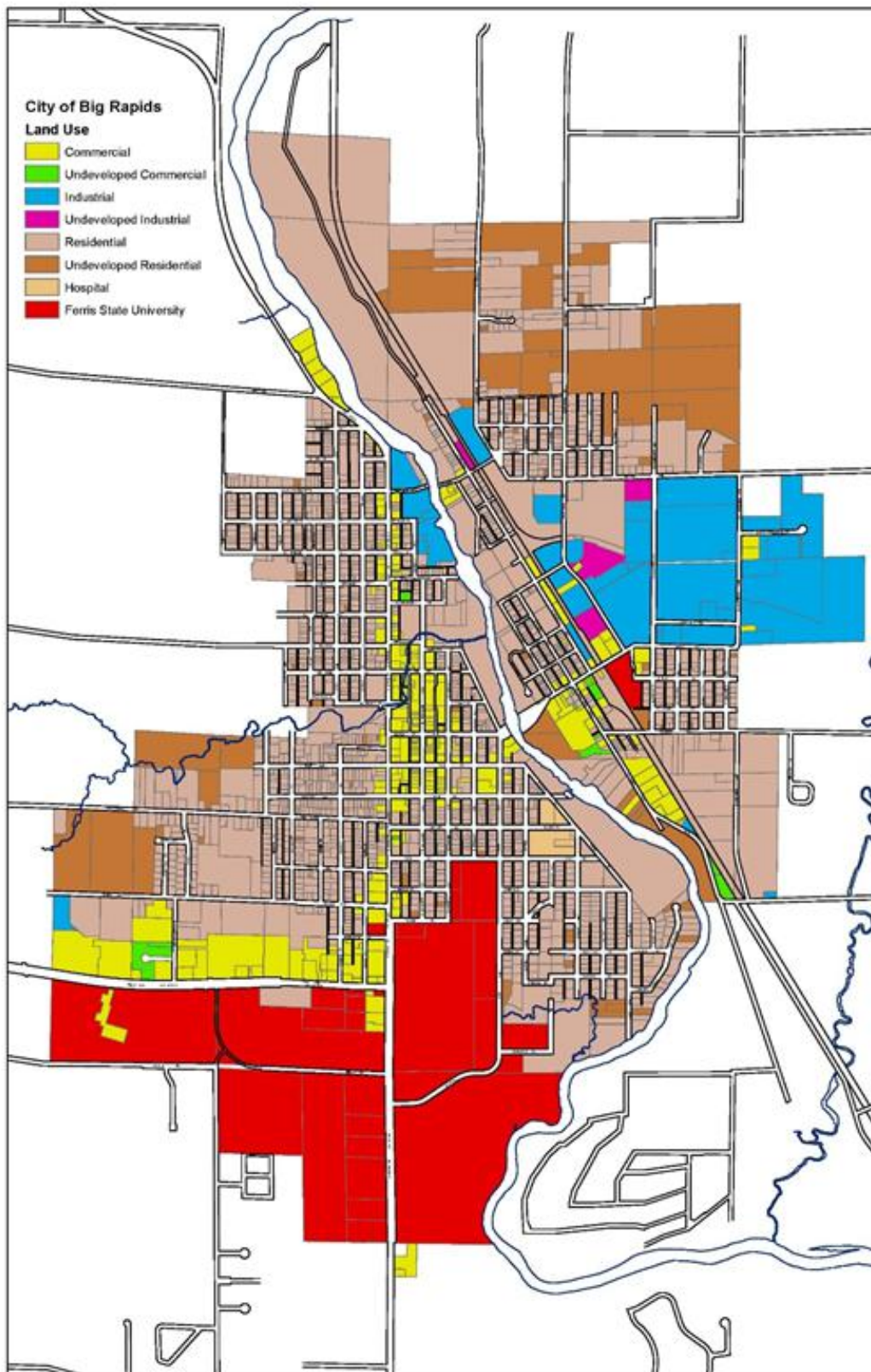
Land Use

Most of the City of Big Rapids is developed, as shown in Table 8. Land use characteristics are important to gain an understanding of the potential for the type, location, and extent of parks and recreation improvements. The top three land uses for the City are residential (34.52%), Ferris State University (16.57%), and streets and alleys (14.29%).

Table 8: Land Use in Big Rapids

Existing Land Use	Acerage	Percent of Total
Commercial	200	7.04
Undeveloped Commercial	11	0.39
Industrial	206	7.25
Undeveloped Industrial	14	0.49
Residential	981	34.52
Undeveloped Residential	206	7.25
Hospital	12	0.42
Ferris State University	471	16.57
Streets and Alleys	406	14.29
Muskegon River	72	2.53
City Parks	263	9.25
Total	2,842	100

Map 2: Land Use in the City of Big Rapids



Community Description and Parks and Recreation Planning

All the components of the Community Description are important to understanding Big Rapids and they provide valuable insight into determining future land and facility development and programming needs for the community. Below are key findings from the community analysis:

- In the past two decades, Big Rapids has experienced a slight decrease in its population, and an increase in both the number of households and the average household size. While the City is projected to decline, both Big Rapids Township and Mecosta County are projected to increase. Of course, projections in the city are difficult to predict since the population depends on Ferris State University's enrollments as well as other factors that are outside of the city's control.
- The population of Big Rapids features a younger demographic. By 2030, the family forming age group is still predicted to be the largest age cohort in Big Rapids with the mature family group increasing slightly as well. To prepare for these demographic changes, Big Rapids will need to prepare for a greater demand in recreation and community facilities and senior services.
- With growing numbers of families on the horizon, as well as the aging Baby Boomer generation, Big Rapids should plan for improved and expanded recreational facilities throughout the City, to cater to the college population, young families, and seniors.



CHAPTER 2

Administrative Structure and Funding

Administration

The laws of the State of Michigan and the City of Big Rapids determine how recreational activities and resources are governed within the public sector. Public Act 156 of 1917 “Recreation and Playgrounds” authorizes cities, villages, counties, townships, and school districts to operate systems of public recreation and playgrounds. Section I of this act states that any city, village, county or township may:

- Operate a system of public recreation and playgrounds;
- Acquire equipment and maintain land, buildings, or other recreational facilities;
- Employ a superintendent of recreation and assistants;
- Vote to expend funds for the operation of such a system.

City of Big Rapids Department of Public Works

The City of Big Rapids’ Department of Public Works handles all maintenance of City rights-of-way and the operation and maintenance of the water, sanitary sewer, and storm sewer systems. The Department of Public Works has a total of 36 employees. Parks and Recreation for the City of Big Rapids is funded through the City’s General Fund Budget and is supplemented by grants when they can be obtained. Table 9 details the budget for the parks, recreation, and pool for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. The operating budget for Parks and Recreation is adopted annually by the City Commission. The fiscal year runs from July 1st to June 30th. Projected capital improvement projects are listed in the Six-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) in Chapter 5 “Action Plan” section of this document.

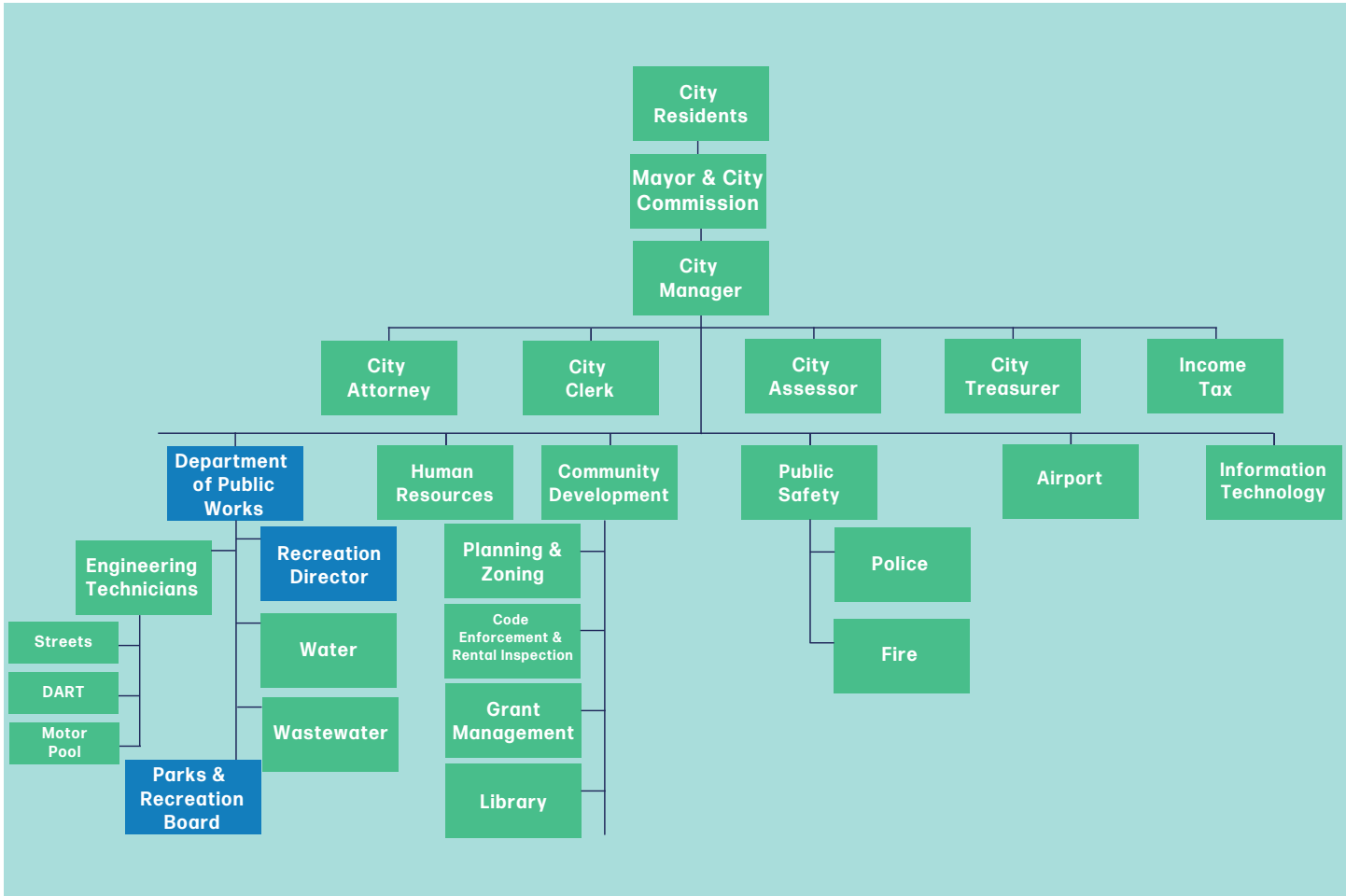
City of Big Rapids Parks Division

The City of Big Rapids’ Parks Division is a sub division inside of the Department of Public Works. There are five part-time seasonal employees and three full-time employees for park maintenance. The Parks Division is responsible for the general oversight and maintenance of the following:

- All of the parks within the City of Big Rapids
- A comprehensive right-of-way tree program

The Parks Division and DPW work together to ensure all park and recreation facilities are in working order through regular maintenance, trash pickup, labor activities related to special events, etc.

Figure 7: Administrative Structure



Department of Public Works Group Picture from the 2020 Annual Report

Parks and Recreation Funding & Grant History

2021 - 2022 Recreation Expenditures

Table 9: Budget Report for the City of Big Rapids, 2021 - 2022

	Spending Item	Budgeted for 2021 - 2022
Park Facilities	Salaries - Seasonal	25,000
	DPW Services	210,300
	Employer FICA	2,000
	Insurance - Unemployment Comp.	700
	Operational Supplies	27,000
	Contracted Services	45,000
	Engineering Services	5,000
	Training	1,000
	Public Utilities	45,000
	Operational Repairs	5,500
	Rental of Non-City Property	13,300
	Equipment Rental	125,000
	Membership Fees	500
	Refunds & Rebates	200
	Project Costs	226,000
	Security Parks	5,000
	Benches	4,800
		741,500
Recreation	Salaries	64,500
	Employer FICA	5,000
	Employer Health Insurance Premiums	15,200
	Insurance - Workers Comp.	1,500
	DB MERS Retirement	12,600
	DC MERS Employer Contributions	4,400
	Supplies	11,400
	CPR	2,500
	Summer Concerts	5,000
	LTD/LIFE/ADD	300
	Travel Expenses	1,000
	Training	1,000
	FSU Facility Rental	6,000
	Equipment Rental	1,500
	Membership Fees	300
		134,300
	Total Appropriations	875,800

Grant History

The basic funding source for the Parks and Recreation Department is the City of Big Rapids' General Fund. General Fund revenues consist of property taxes, state-shared revenues, grants, license and permit fees, charges for services, interest on investments and court fines. Table 10 provide a look into Big Rapids Parks & Recreation grant history.

Table 10: Parks and Recreation Grant History

Project #	Project Title	Project Description	Project Year	Grant Amount	Project Status
26-00302	Mitchell Creek Recreation Park	Develop 10 acres of land to include construction of outdoor swimming pool with decking, bathhouse, lighting, parking, site improvement, fencing, and picnic area.	1972	\$100,000	Closed
26-00338	Hemlock Street Park	Develop 12.8 acres for picnic area, parking, lighting, playground equipment, water system, landscaping and roads, three fenced tennis courts and grading.	1972	\$25,000	Closed
26-01085	Big Rapids White Water Park	Paved access road, parking lot, picnic tables, grills, benches, and a woodchip trail.	1972	\$26,419.64	Closed
BF89-431	Hemlock Ballfield Lights	Replace ballfield lighting with new light system.	1989	\$18,000	Closed
BF89-433	Hemlock Park Tennis Courts	Resurface four tennis courts.	1989	\$15,000	Closed
BF90-321	Pool Surge Tank Replacement	Replace existing surge tank and all valves, redesign mechanical room equipment for community swimming pool.	1990	\$30,000	Closed
TF97-178	Waterfront Trailway	Development of a 4,400 ft landscaped, non-motorized waterfront trailway which will include a picnic shelter, river overlooks, fishing areas, educational area, and restrooms in the north end of Riverside Park.	1997	\$100,000	Closed
TF99-247	Waterfront Trailway	Development of a 3,900 ft landscaped, non-motorized trailway adjacent to the Muskegon River and connecting to the White Pine Trail and development of the adjacent Northend Riverside Park, including a large picnic shelter, sand volleyball, playground, relocated access drive, signage, and additional parking.	1999	\$163,000	Closed
TF01-165	Big Rapids Riverwalk	Development of a 6,445 ft landscaped, non-motorized trailway including fishing platforms along the Muskegon River. Connects Northend Riverside, Swede Hill, Hemlock Parks and the White Pine Trail.	2001	\$493,300	Closed
TF02-163	Big Rapids Riverwalk	Develop a 2,900 ft non-motorized trail along Muskegon River with barrier-free fishing platforms. Trail will connect Northend Riverside, Swede Hill, Hanchett, and Hemlock Parks with the White Pine Trail.	2002	\$490,000	Closed
TF07-046	Mitchell Creek Nature Area Acquisition	Fee simple acquisition of 45 acres of undeveloped land with 4,400 linear ft on Mitchell Creek for fishing, hiking, protection of land, and to link the city trail system.	2007	\$143,700	Closed
TF07-097	Riverwalk Development: River Street Park	Development of 4,800 ft of Big Rapids Riverwalk and additional trail amenities, fishing platform, and parking through 16-acre River Street Park.	2007	\$309,400	Closed
RP16-0054	Mitchell Creek Park Improvement	Renovation of the existing parking lot and trail to be universally accessible.	2016	\$45,000	Closed
RP19-0092	Anna Howard Shaw Memorial Park Improvements	Development to renovate the park and provide a ADA/universally compliant recreational opportunity. Will replace the outdated playground with a new play structure and musical/play node. Paved parking with two universally accessible parking spaces. LED lighting will improve visibility and safety. A six-foot wide universally accessible concrete walking path will connect the parking lot, play structures, Anna Howard Shaw statue, and existing city sidewalks. Along the pathway will include interpretive signs which will be geared at children's learning of nature.	2019	\$150,000	PA Executed

Volunteers

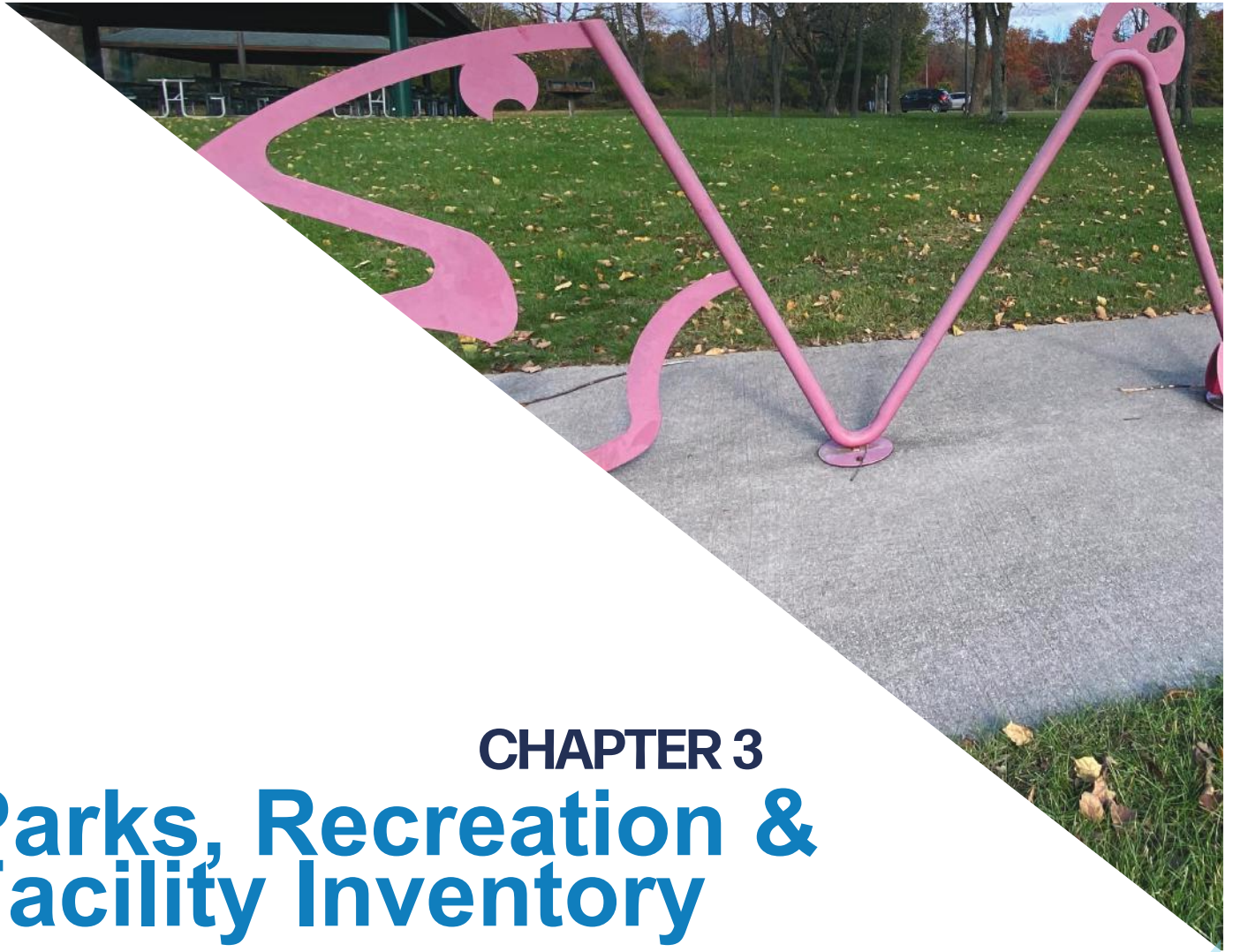
The City of Big Rapids works closely with many volunteers throughout the community. Various groups have interest toward beautification of the park system. The Big Rapids Garden Club and General Federation of Women's Club work diligently to assist with plantings in the park system. A variety of Registered Student Organizations affiliated with Ferris State University assist the City with many cleanup projects and recreation programs. Finally, community members in Big Rapids and the surrounding area, assist the City parks and recreation programs with their overwhelming desire to contribute towards keeping the lands well maintained and the programs at nominal costs.



Relationship with School Districts

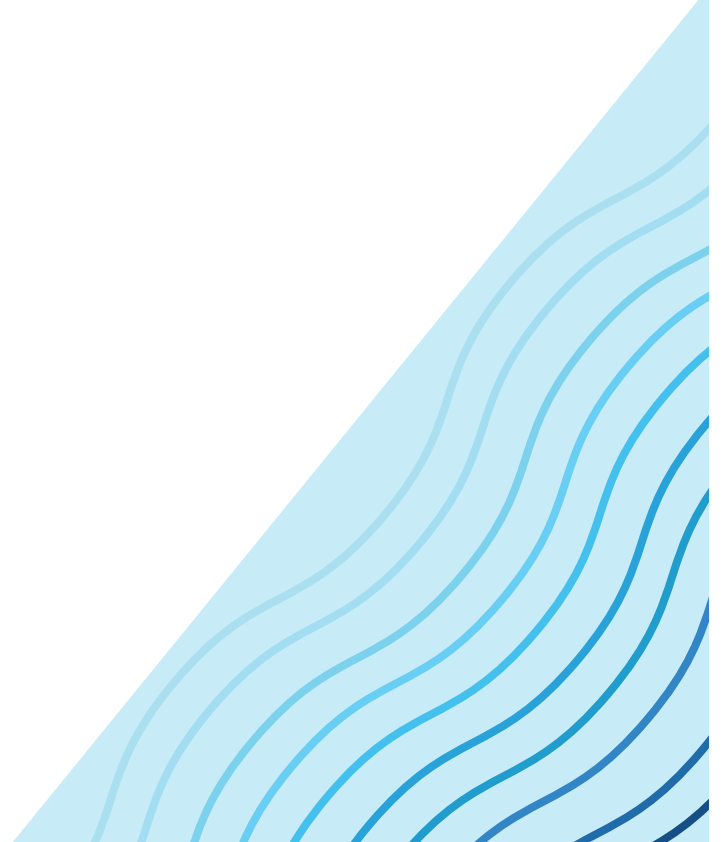
The Big Rapids Public Schools facilities are used for some of the recreation programs, such as women's and coed volleyball, open gym basketball, senior fitness and line dance, youth tennis, Girls on The Run, and special events: Daddy Daughter Dance, concerts, and Car Cruise In's. The Recreation Department maintains storage space within the Big Rapids Middle School as well.





CHAPTER 3

Parks, Recreation & Facility Inventory

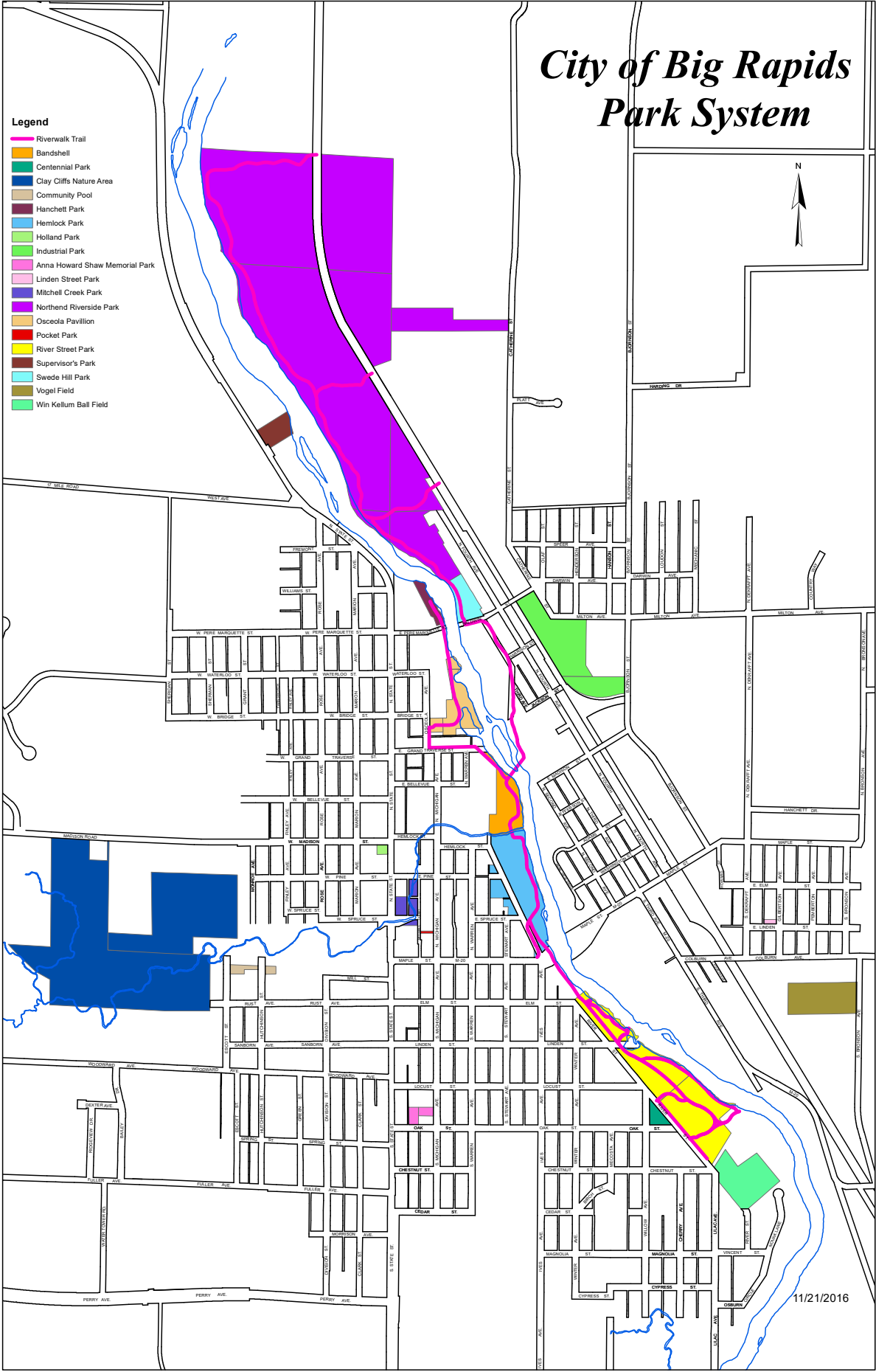


Developing a complete inventory of existing City of Big Rapids parks and recreation facilities is an essential component of a future Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan, as it provides a basis for developing the Action Plan. Understanding what parks and recreation facilities and programs are available to city residents will assist decision-making in the future. The inventory covers the following components:



- City of Big Rapids Parks and Facilities
- Mecosta County Parks and Facilities
- Regional Parks and Facilities
- Universal Accessibility

Map 3: Existing Park and Recreation Facilities



City Parks

Park land in the City of Big Rapids was classified using the MDNR's 'Guidelines for the Development of Community, Park, Recreation, Open Space, and Greenway Plans' (MDNR, 2009) and National Recreation Park Association (NRPA, 1995). Park classifications are defined as follows:

Connector Trails

Connector trails would include a multi-use trail to give non-motorized access to parks and other uses throughout Big Rapids. Modes of travel include walking, biking, cross-country skiing, and in-line skating. Active play areas may be included.

Service Area:

- No applicable standard

Desirable Size:

- Sufficient area to protect the resource and provide maximum use.

Acres/1,000 Population

- Variable

Mini-Park:

Used to address limited, or unique recreational needs, typically serving the needs of residents in the immediate neighborhood. For example, suggested recreational facilities for an individual mini-park are a small playground, two picnic tables, and 1/4 acre open space.

Service Area:

- Less than 1/4-mile radius

Desirable Size:

- 2,500 square feet - 1 acre

Acres/1,000 Population

- 0.25 to 0.50 acre

Neighborhood Park:

Neighborhood Parks remain the basic unit of the park system and serves as the recreational and social focus of the neighborhood. These parks should offer a variety of activities to accommodate a range of ages, physical abilities, and recreational interests. It is recommended that this park type has 50% active users (fields, courts, playgrounds, skating, etc) and 50% passive uses (trails, picnic areas).

Service Area:

- 1/4 to 1/2 mile radius

Desirable Size:

- 5-10 acres

Acres/1,000 Population

- 1.0 to 2.0 acres

Community Parks and Facilities

Community-wide parks include larger parks with diverse environmental quality. A variety of passive and active uses are provided, including athletic fields, sledding hills, trails, picnic areas, and playgrounds.

Service Area:

- 1/2 - 3-mile radius, several neighborhoods

Desirable Size:

- 20-50 acres

Acres/1,000 Population

- 5.0 to 8.0 acres

City Parks and Facilities by Type in Big Rapids

Connector Trails:

- White Pine Trail
- Riverwalk



Mini-Parks:

- Holland Park
- Anna Howard Shaw Memorial Park
- Linden Street Park
- Pocket Park
- Osceola Pavilion



Neighborhood Parks:

- Hanchett Park
- Supervisor's Park
- Mitchell Creek Park
- Swede Hill Park
- River Street Park



Community Parks and Facilities:

- Hemlock Park
- Northend Riverside Park
- Clay Cliffs Nature Area
- Community Pool
- Industrial Ball Field
- Vogel Fields
- Depot Park



Connector Trails

White Pine Trail

2.6 miles of the 92-mile trail located in city limits



The White Pine Trail is 92 miles long and is the longest rail-to-trail corridor in Michigan running from Comstock Park to Cadillac. The multi-use trail was previously owned by Penn Central Railroad and was dedicated as a State Park in 1994. Approximately 2.6 miles of the trail is located within the boundaries of the City of Big Rapids.

Future Recommendations:

- Install restrooms to accommodate trail users.
- Develop Depot Park and include a pavilion, ADA accessible picnic tables, community firepits, a water filling station, additional areas to rest, and other trailhead-related amenities.
- Air pump and tire repair station along the White Pine Trail.

Riverwalk

3.29 miles long



Riverwalk is a linear park that runs on both the east and west sides of the Muskegon River and is used by people throughout Big Rapids and surrounding areas. It also connects with the state's White Pine Trail.

Amenities:

- Both paved and unpaved trails
- Muskegon River access
- Seating areas
- Fishing platforms

Future Recommendations:

- Develop Riverwalk Phase IV that will add a southern connection from the Riverwalk to the White Pine Trail.
- Replace pavement from Swede Hill to Northend Riverside Park.

Mini-Parks

Holland Park

.31 acres



Holland Park is located on State Street and holds a memorial for veterans and hometown heroes.

Amenities:

- Veteran memorial
- Seating areas

Anna Howard Memorial Park

.39 acres



Anna Howard Shaw Memorial Park is located beside the Big Rapids Community Library on South Michigan Avenue. The park features a memorial sculpture dedicated to Anna Howard Shaw and has a newly developed play area.

Amenities:

- Playscape and play / musical node
- Concrete walking path
- Interpretative signs geared toward children's literacy and nature

Future Recommendations:

- Install storyboards along the park sidewalk.

Mini-Parks Continued

Linden Street Park

.06 acres



Linden Street Park is located at the corner of Gilbertson and Linden Streets. The mini-park features a play area for children and a small area for plants.

Amenities:

- Small playground that has been recently painted.

Pocket Park

.09 acres



Pocket Park is located between Horizon Bank and The Raven Brewing & BBQ in downtown Big Rapids. The park serves as both a resting place surrounded by beautiful landscaping and holds the free summer concert series.

Amenities:

- Entertainment area
- Art installation
- Landscaping
- Benches and picnic tables

Mini-Parks Continued

Rotary Park

.88 acres



Rotary Park is located between Spectrum Health and River Street Park. The park features the Rotary Gazebo, a picnic area, and an outdoor fitness court.

Amenities:

- Fitness court
- Rotary Gazebo
- Picnic area

Osceola Pavilion

6.71 acres



Osceola Pavilion is located off of Osceola Avenue and offers access to the Riverwalk.

Amenities:

- Covered pavilion
- Access to the Riverwalk

Future Recommendations:

- Install a small playground

Neighborhood Parks

Hanchett Park

1.32 acres



Hanchett Park has a pavilion, access to the Riverwalk and fishing opportunities. The park is located within the northern portion of town off of North State Street and has access to the Muskegon River.

Amenities:

- Pavilion
- Fishing access
- Riverwalk access
- Interpretative signage

Future Recommendations:

- Update pavilion

Supervisor's Park

2.15 acres



Supervisor's Park consists of vacant park land near the Muskegon River.

Amenities:

- Vacant park land

Future Recommendations:

- Develop access to the Muskegon River

Neighborhood Parks Continued

Mitchell Creek Park

1.76 acres



Mitchell Creek Park features several picnic tables, fishing areas, and walking trails. The park is located at the corner of Pine and State Streets.

Amenities:

- Art installation / pavilion
- Restrooms
- Walking trails

Future Recommendations:

- Replace southeast corner stairway
- Repair riprap walls
- Phase II of light replacement along alleys
- Planting in garden area near gazebo
- Signage to guide patrons from Pocket Park and downtown to Mitchell Creek Park

River Street Park

16.45 acres



River Street Park is located between 300 and 600 blocks of River Street. This park offers plenty of leisure and recreational opportunities for the whole family.

Amenities:

- Hiking and dog walking trails
- Baseball diamonds
- Soccer fields
- Fishing area
- Brutus Dog Park

Future Recommendations:

- Add sidewalk along Linden Street to Riverwalk
- Extend the south parking lot
- Include a fence along west side of soccer field
- Additional bleachers needed for existing soccer fields
- Repair and replace parking lot near Win Kellum Ball Field

Neighborhood Parks Continued

Swede Hill Park

2.77 acres



Swede Hill Park is located on the northeast side of Baldwin Street. This historic park is dedicated to the early Swedish settlers in the area and is used for picnicking and fishing.

Amenities:

- Fishing access
- Access to the Riverwalk and the Muskegon River
- Historic marker
- Art installation

Future Recommendations:

- Potential location for the skate park development



Community Parks and Facilities

Clay Cliffs Nature Area

69.9 acres



Clay Cliffs is a large nature area with unimproved nature trails. Over 23 acres are in the City and over 46 acres are in Big Rapids Township.

Amenities:

- Unimproved nature trails

Future Recommendations:

- Develop Clay Cliffs entrance area to be ADA accessible
- Install and maintain trails
- Install signage throughout the nature area
- Develop foot bridges for crossing over the creek
- Implement designated sledding area

Charles E. Fairman Community Pool

6.40 acres



The community pool is well used in the summer months by the entire Big Rapids community. Community members can find the pool while walking or driving down Hutchinson Street.

Amenities:

- Swimming pool
- Changing rooms
- Restrooms

Future Recommendations:

- Install a slide for the pool
- Make an indoor facility
- Designate gender-neutral changing areas and restrooms

Community Parks and Facilities Continued

Hemlock Park

10.36 acres



Hemlock Park is located at the east end of Hemlock Street and Warren Avenue. The park offers many amenities for recreational opportunities during every season.

Amenities:

- Playscape
- Tennis courts
- Softball field
- Handicap swing
- Picnic and rest areas
- Seasonal ice rink
- Restrooms
- Bandshell
- Paved Riverwalk



Future Recommendations:

- Construct a new pavilion
- Construct new pickleball courts
- Install a splash pad with a 10,000-gallon water reservoir for irrigation
- Repave road and parking lot
- Implement additional lighting
- Replace and update playscape/playground equipment
- Construct a small gazebo
- Install irrigation systems on softball field
- Replace wooden softball lights
- Install ADA accessible changing stalls to complement the use of the splash pad.
- Construct new basketball courts
- Replace tennis courts
- Install a universally-accessible kayak and canoe launch

Community Parks and Facilities Continued

Northend Riverside Park

151.15 acres



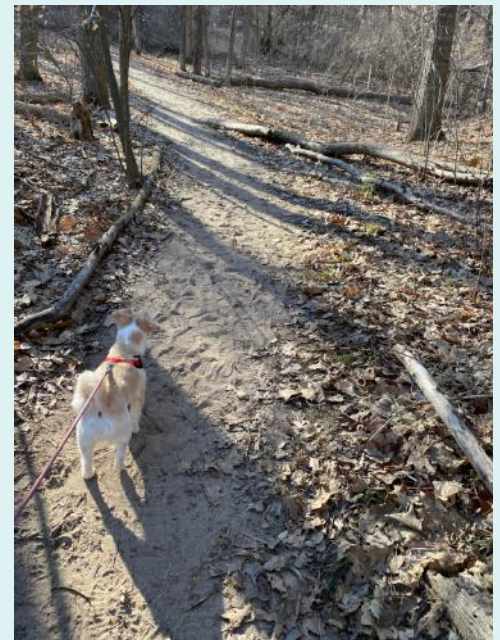
Northend Riverside Park is located at the north-end of Fourth Avenue and features an ample amount of recreation opportunities which bring people from many different communities into the Big Rapids area. Trail users can use the riverview walk to access the White Pine Trail.

Amenities:

- Picnic and rest areas
- Playground
- Disc-golf courses
- Cross-country skiing
- Volleyball court
- Fishing access

Future Recommendations:

- Permanent restroom facilities
- Develop a skate park
- Improve access site for tubing and canoeing
- Develop pickleball, basketball, and volleyball courts, soccer fields, softball diamonds, and a dog park
- Maintenance and upkeep of the disc-golf course
- Additional parking for the disc-golf course
- Address riverbank erosion



Community Parks and Facilities Continued

Vogel Fields



Vogel Fields is located south of Colburn Avenue on the west side of Bronson Avenue.

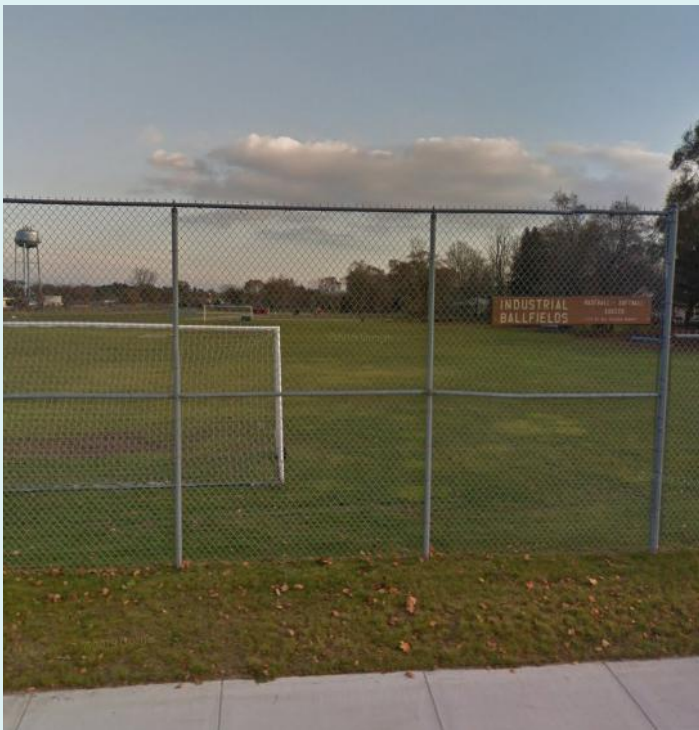
Amenities:

- Two ball fields
- Picnic areas
- Playscape

Future Recommendations:

- Expand field #2 with a 275-foot fence
- Redesign and pave parking area
- Install lighting
- Develop restrooms
- Update playscape

Industrial Park Ball Field



Industrial Park is located on Catherine Street and Milton Avenue.

Amenities:

- Two softball fields
- Soccer field

Future Recommendations:

- Additional lighting on fields
- Refurbish old baseball field for use by baseball and softball leagues
- Repair existing fence
- Complete fencing on back baseball diamond
- Develop restroom facility and parking lot
- Add benches and bleachers to the baseball and soccer fields

Community Parks and Facilities Continued

Win Kellum Ball Field



Win Kellum Ball Field is located off of River Street next to River Street Park.

Amenities:

- Baseball fields

Future Recommendations:

- Add lighting on fields
- Refurbish existing fencing

Depot Park



Depot Park is undeveloped park space located adjacent to the White Pine Trail and the former Train Depot Building. Future development of this park will serve as a Trailhead for the White Pine Trail. Amenities will include restrooms, bike repair station, a pavilion and rest area, trailer parking, and commissioned artwork.

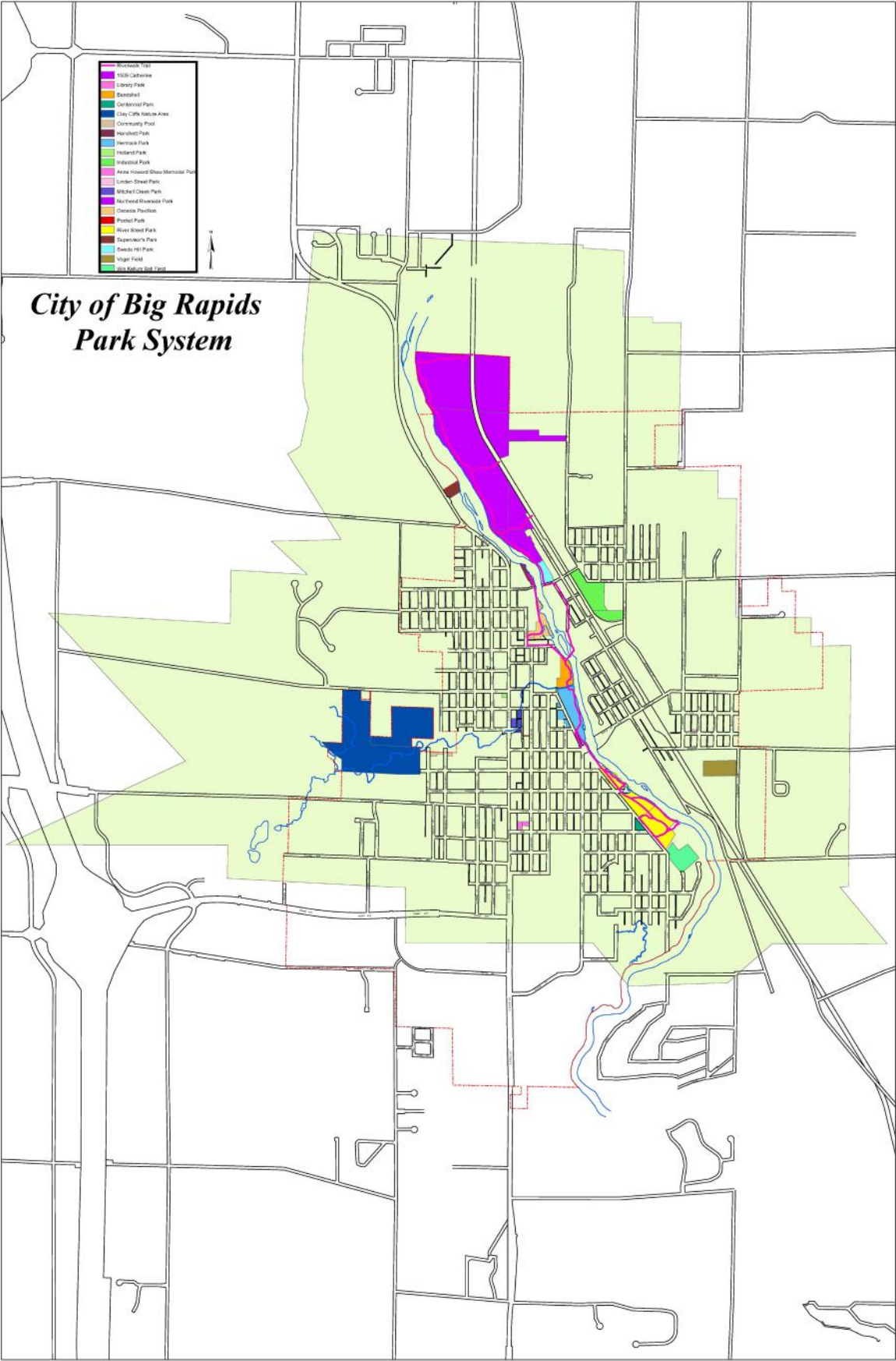
Amenities:

- Future Trailhead for the White Pine Trail

Future Recommendations:

- Restrooms
- Bike repair stations
- Pavilion and rest area
- Trailer parking
- Commissioned artwork

Map 4: Park Service Areas - 1/4 Mile Walkability



Additional Recreational Facilities

Schools

There are two elementary schools, one early childhood center, one middle school, and one high school in Big Rapids. There are two private schools: St. Peter's Lutheran, and St. Mary's Catholic; and one Charter school, Crossroads Charter Academy. There is also one public university, Ferris State University. Each school offers its own recreation opportunities from soccer fields, playgrounds, and gymnasiums.



Eastwood Early Childhood Community Center
4.3 acres

The Eastwood Early Childhood Community Center houses the following programs: Early Head Start, Head Start, Great Start Collaborative, Parent Coalition, Homeless Education, Great Start Readiness Program, SLD Read, Community Mental Health Autism Center, Early On, BRPS Young 5s Programs, MOISD Services, BRPS Early Childhood Special Education, and the Administrative Offices of NEMCSA.

Existing Facilities:

- Playscapes (includes a climbing wall)
- Swings (4 swings, 1 structure)
- Basketball net
- Toddler play area



Brookside Elementary School
7 acres

Brookside Elementary is located on the 200 block of Escott Street. The facilities include a variety of equipment for different age levels and interests.

Existing Facilities:

- Playscapes
- Baseball/softball fields
- Swings (12 swings, 2 structures)
- Basketball court (1 half court)
- Gymnasium

Riverview Elementary School
4.4 acres

Riverview Elementary is located within the 500 block of Willow Avenue. The facilities include a variety of equipment for different age levels and interests.

Existing Facilities:

- Playscapes
- Basketball courts (3 half courts and 1 full court)
- Baseball/softball fields
- Gymnasium



Big Rapids Middle School
13.5 acres

Big Rapids Middle School is located on the 500 block of N Warren Avenue and offers a gymnasium and soccer fields for the community to utilize.

Existing Facilities:

- Soccer fields
- Gymnasium



Big Rapids High School
40 acres

Big Rapids High School is located just outside of Big Rapids city limits and is in Big Rapids Township. The school offers several facilities that can be enjoyed by all age groups.

Existing Facilities:

- Football fields (2 practice fields)
- Softball fields
- Baseball diamonds
- Soccer fields
- Tennis courts (7 courts)
- Track and football complex
- Cross-country trail
- Gymnasium



St. Peter's Lutheran School
2.2 acres

St. Peter's Lutheran School is a private school located on the 400 block of West Bellevue Street. The school offers preschool through eighth grade education and provides recreational activities for students.

Existing Facilities:

- Playscapes
- Pavilion
- Gymnasium



St. Mary's Catholic School 4.4 acres

St. Mary's Catholic School is a private school located on the 900 block of Marion Avenue. The school teaches preschool through eighth grade and has recreational opportunities to match the differences in ages.

Existing Facilities:

- Playground
- Gymnasium



Crossroads Charter Academy 3 acres

Crossroads Charter Academy is a Kindergarten through 12th-grade charter school located on the 200 block of North State Street.

Existing Facilities:

- Soccer/football field
- Outdoor track
- Playground
- Two gymnasiums



Ferris State University

Ferris State University is located throughout the City of Big Rapids. This public university has ample recreational opportunities that both students and community members use.

Existing Facilities:

- Racquetball courts
- Fitness center
- Indoor and outdoor tennis courts
- Two ice rinks
- Indoor pool
- Climbing wall
- Indoor and outdoor track
- Multi-purpose courts
- Weight room
- Multi-purpose fields
- Basketball courts
- Football field
- 18-hole golf course



Regional Recreation Opportunities

Mecosta County Parks

Mecosta County has developed an excellent county park system composed of 430+ acres. There are five regional county parks including Paris Park, Merrill-Gorrel Park, School Section Lake Park, Brower Park, and Davis Bridge Park. There are also two County campgrounds: Haymarsh Lake, and Tubbs Lake State Forest Campground. The White Pine Valley Recreation Area and Michigan's Dragon at Hardy Dam runs through Mecosta County and are heavily utilized by trail enthusiasts.



Manistee National Forest

The Manistee National Forest is composed of over 533,901 acres and is located west and southwest of Big Rapids. There are 18 developed campgrounds within the Manistee National Forest. This area offers recreational opportunities for hunting, fishing, hiking, water sports, and winter activities.



State Forests and Game Areas

The Pere Marquette State Forest contains over 15,000 acres with a portion located within Mecosta County. The Haymarsh Lake State Game Area located northeast of the City of Big Rapids. The Martiny Lake is located to the east of the City. Both areas provide opportunities during all four



Images courtesy of mecostacountyparks.com

Inventory of Existing Recreational Boating Facilities

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources lists 22 boating access sites for Mecosta County, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Boat Access Sites in Mecosta County

Boat Access Sites in Mecosta County
131 Bridge
Alma Lake
Big Evans Lake
Brockway Lake
Browers Park Marina
Burgess Lake
Chippewa Lake
Clear Lake
Former Rustord Pond
Haymarsh Lake Flooding
Hillview Lake
Jehsen Lake
Lake Mecosta
Lower Evans Lake
Paris Park
Pretty Lake
River Bend Bluffs
Rogers Pond
Townline Lake
Tubbs Island SFCG
Tubbs Lake SFCG
Winchester Dam



Universal Access

A critical component in planning for recreational facilities is to provide universal access to all facilities. Universal access includes, but is not limited to, ensuring that adequate universal access parking spaces, sidewalks, trails, picnic tables, and playground equipment are provided for renovated or new recreational facilities. Standards from the Accessibility Checklist, founded upon the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS) and the codes and standards of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) were used to verify barrier-free compliance.

The MDNR Guidelines require that a universal access ranking be given to each facility for assessing its accessibility to persons with disabilities. The assessment considers the accessibility of both the facilities themselves as well as the access routes to them. The following system, provided by the 2010 Standards for Accessible Design, was used to assess each park.

In accordance with the MDNR standards, city facilities have been evaluated to determine if a person with any of the following criteria can safely and independently access and use the park or facility:

- Level 1:** The park is not accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities. The site includes little paved areas and the facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are not easily accessible.
- Level 2:** The park is somewhat accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities. Either the parking area or pathways are paved, but not both. Many of the facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are not easily accessible.
- Level 3:** The park is mostly accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities. Most of the parking areas and pathways are paved, and some of the facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are accessible but may not be completely barrier-free.
- Level 4:** The park is completely accessible to people with a broad range of physical disabilities. Parking areas and pathways area paved, and most of the facilities such as play equipment or picnic areas are easily accessible.
- Level 5:** The entire park was developed or renovated using the principles of universal design, a design approach which enables all environments to be usable by everyone, to the greatest extent possible, regardless of age, ability, or situation.

City parks are evaluated in the table of the following page.

Accessibility Rankings

Table 12: ADA Accessibility Rankings for City Parks

Park	Accessibility Ranking
Charles E. Fairman Community Pool	3
Clay Cliffs Nature Area	1
Hanchett Park	4
Hemlock Park	4
Holland Park	4
Industrial Park Ball Field	4
Anna Howard Shaw Memorial (Library) Park	5
Linden Street Park	4
Mitchell Creek Park	4
Northend Riverside Park	4
Pocket Park	4
River Street Park	3
Riverwalk	5
Rotary Park	4
Supervisor's Park	1
Swede Hill Park	4
Vogel Fields	4
Osceola Pavilion	4
Win Kellum Ball Field	4

Accessibility Rankings

- 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 facility/park meets accessibility guidelines
- 5: The entire facility/park was developed/renovated using the principals of universal design



CHAPTER 4

Basis for Action Plan



An essential task in the recreation planning process is to determine the recreational needs of the community. These needs aid in the development of the action plan. This task is accomplished using several methods, including comparing the community to national recreation guidelines for the size of the community, information gathered during the Community Workshop, discussion with the Parks and Recreation Department, and by reviewing current city offerings for parks and recreation.

Planning Process

The City of Big Rapids directed the update of the Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan. Citizen and city input played a critical role in the development of the Plan. As a result, recommendations described within the Action Plan reflect the needs and ideas of those who use the city parks and recreation facilities. The plan process included seven tasks which are described below.

Task One: Community Description. The first task was to obtain a description of Big Rapids' physical and social features. These features include location, land use, environmental and natural features, as well as population features including age distribution, people with physical disabilities, types of households, employment, and income.

Task Two: Administrative Structure and Funding. The second task was to obtain and review the administrative structure of the city and the administration of parks and recreation. The analysis also includes a review of the current and projected revenues and expenditures for the city as well as the grant history of funding received by the city.

Task Three: Parks, Recreation, and Facility Inventory. The parks, recreation, and facility inventory included site visits and written descriptions of facilities in the City. The information includes the acreage, barrier-free accessibility, types of recreation activities, types of equipment, and other descriptions of the physical attributes of the area's facilities. A list of neighboring communities' facilities, state parks, county parks, and local parks within a short distance of Big Rapids is also included. The city's programs are discussed in the section as well.

Task Four: Public Participation. A survey was distributed by Community Development Staff during the summer of 2021. The results of the this survey are discussed further in this chapter. In addition, public input was collected during the Community Workshop as well as during the 30-day review period.

Task Five: Analysis. Based on the data collected from tasks one through four, the information was analyzed in accordance with national and state guidelines, local needs, the experience of the city, the desires of the residents, and potential funding sources.

Task Six: Action Plan. Upon completion of the analysis, the previous 2017 Parks and Recreation Plan goals and objectives were reviewed; then goals and objectives were created based on the previous Plan and public input to provide a framework for this 2022 Action Plan chapter. This updated Action Plan of the 2022 5-year Plan offers a checklist of actions to be accomplished, with a timeframe, responsible parties, cost, and potential funding sources.

Task Seven: Plan Completion and Adoption. Once the survey and comments were analyzed, the inventory completed, and estimates provided for the six (6) year Capital Improvements Program, the draft Plan was reviewed by the Parks & Recreation Board and the public. Additional changes to the draft were incorporated. The Board then reviewed the final Plan and recommended adoption of the Plan to the City Commission.

The City Commission formally adopted the 5-Year Parks & Recreation Plan during the December 20, 2021 meeting. See Appendices B and C for adoption documentation and meeting minutes.

Public Input

Working together with the City of Big Rapids' Parks and Recreation Department, the Community Development Department conducted and analyzed a survey to gather community input. In addition, a Community Workshop was held on September 22, 2021. A thirty (30) day public review period was conducted, and a public hearing was held as required by the Department of Natural Resources guidelines for the development of five (5) year community park and recreation plans.

1. 5-Year Plan Survey – July and August 2021
2. Community Workshop – September 22, 2021
3. Park & Rec Board Meeting to review draft Plan
4. Thirty (30) day Public Review and Comment period
5. Public Hearing – December 20, 2021

Survey Results

An important component of the public engagement program for the 2022 Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan is the survey. The survey was designed to take about 5 minutes for respondents to complete. Overall, the survey sought to gauge to what degree residents value the parks and recreation system and what should be the future priorities of the Parks and Recreation Department. Comprehensive survey results can be found in Appendix E.



Image courtesy of the Big Rapids Pioneer



Dear Valued Big Rapids Community Members,

The City of Big Rapids' Parks and Recreation Department along with the Community Development Department are in the process of updating the 5-year Parks and Recreation Plan. As part of this process, we are asking the community to take this short survey.

The survey will provide the City with valuable insight into how the parks are used and future park needs. The responses are confidential and will be used to take a resident-driven approach to guide policy decisions, prioritize park improvements, and identify unmet recreational needs in the City of Big Rapids.

Thank you for taking time to help assist in future development of our park system!

Sincerely,

Emily Szymanski
Planning & Zoning Technician
Rental Inspection Coordinator
Paula Pribe
Community Development Director

Kasey Wright
Planning Intern

Heather Bowman
Public Works Director

Josh Pyles
Park & Recreation Coordinator
Farmer's Market Master
Downtown Business Association Director



Community Workshop Findings

A second way the City received public input was by holding a Parks and Recreation Community Workshop on September 22, 2021. At the Workshop, citizens could review the survey results from the Parks and Recreation Survey and help the City design the Action Plan. The Workshop consisted of five stations:

1. An introduction station that displayed survey results
2. A budget station to understand how citizens would spend City money for park and recreation projects
3. A station for potential future park and recreation developments in the City
4. Winter activities in the City of Big Rapids
5. 'Design-a-park' activity to help design the Depot Park.

Results Overall

At the end of the survey period, the city received 327 complete responses. Out of all responses, 59% of participants are city residents and 41% are non-residents. When asked how often respondents visit City parks, 37% of people said they visit a few times a month while 33% visit parks a few times a week. To get an understanding of what parks are utilized most often, respondents were asked to select the parks they have visited within the last year. The three most visited parks from the results are Hemlock Park and the Bandshell, Northend Riverside Park, and Mitchell Creek Park.

Most survey respondents visit parks with friends (30%) or with kids ages 0-12 (27%) and visit during spring, summer, and autumn (162 respondents). A shocking 85 people visit the parks during all four seasons, indicating that more winter park activities would be beneficial for park users.

To access the parks, most people drive cars (41%), but a high percent (36%) walk. When asked why park users visit the parks, 30% of respondents stated that they enjoy being in nature and 29% visit to participate in exercise or for social activities.

Moreover, 152 respondents agreed that the top amenity offered at parks are the trails and the Riverwalk. When asked what initiative residents would like to see prioritized for future development in the City of Big Rapids, 91 respondents chose a farmer's market with ice-skating rink while 79 respondents chose the development of a skate park.

Disaggregated Results

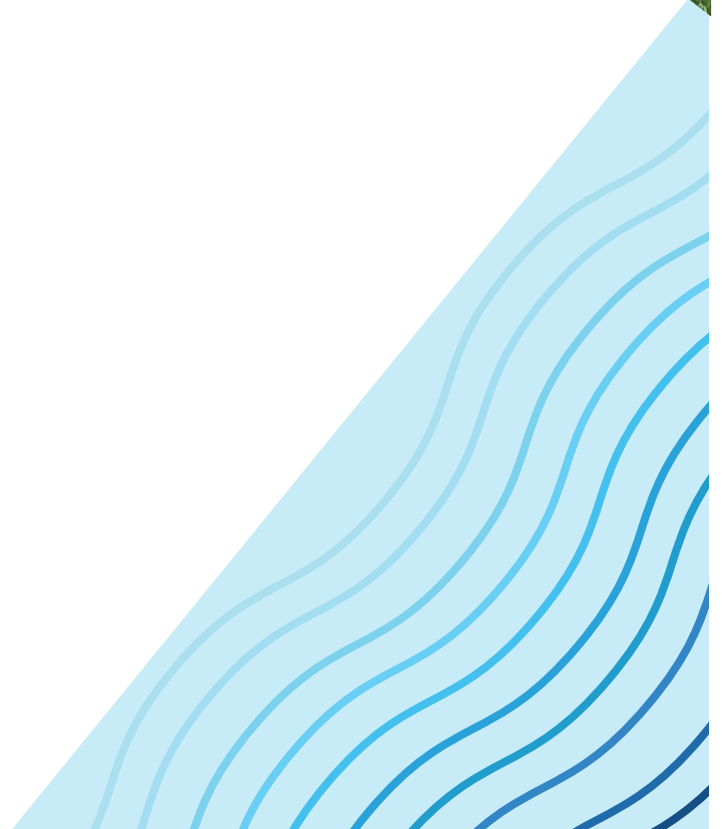
When further analyzing the survey results into two categories: City of Big Rapids residents and non-residents, several questions were reviewed. For example, when asked how frequently respondents visit City parks, most residents (68 respondents) visit a few times a week whereas most non-residents (50) visit a few times a month. Both residents and non-residents agreed Hemlock Park and the Bandshell and Northend Riverside Parks are the two most frequently visited parks. Residents and non-residents also agreed on the seasons in which they visit city parks, with Spring, Summer, Autumn and Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter being the top two selections.

City residents and non-residents disagreed on the initiative that the City of Big Rapids should prioritize for future development – 33% of residents chose the skate park development as their top priority and 34% of non-residents chose the farmer's market pavilion with an ice-skating rink.



CHAPTER 5

Action Plan



By using the comprehensive planning process of trend identification, public input, and public meetings, the City of Big Rapids established a framework for the Action Plan. The Action Plan consists of goals and objectives that recommend improvements and enhancements of city parks and recreation facilities and programming, as well as identifying the tools needed for implementation of the Plan components.

A complementary component of the Action Plan is the Capital Improvement Program. Action strategies that may require significant capital investment from the community have been organized into a six-year Capital Improvement Program with cost estimates. Specific projects have been prioritized in the Capital Improvement Program to better manage the city's finances, and to equally distribute the projects over a six-year cycle. The timing of these projects may be influenced, moved, or eliminated depending upon economic conditions, available funding, and/or grant awards.

The Action Plan is organized into four sections:

- Parks and Recreation Goals and Objectives
- System-Wide Recommendations
- Six-Year Capital Improvement Program
- Action Plan Items



Parks and Recreation Goals and Objectives

To provide a guideline for recreational decision-making and activity programming, City staff worked with the Parks and Recreation Board as well as with citizens through input from the survey to develop the following goals and objectives.

Goal 1. Continue to provide high-quality maintenance of parks.

Objectives:

- Purchase/install high quality equipment whenever possible to decrease waste in repair and replacement cost.
- Consider a volunteer “Adopt-A-Park” program that would complement the Parks and Recreation Department’s effort of maintaining city parks.

Goal 2. Continue park upgrades to address the recreation needs of park facilities.

Objectives:

- Develop the park for the Depot Park property
- Develop additional passive recreation opportunities, such as benches, shaded areas, upgraded or expanded walking trails, bike paths, picnic facilities, and other features, that appeal to a broad age range of city residents.
- Install sufficient bicycle, kayak, and canoe racks located within the parks to accommodate trail users, Muskegon River users, and visitors.
- Continue to upgrade and expand restroom access at all city parks and recreational facilities that meets ADA standards.
- Install additional lighting at recreational facilities.
- Explore the possibility of creating a public/private partnership to create a skate park and other recreational facility needs.
- Consider seasonal enhancements such as holiday lighting at Hemlock and Northend Park.
- Install additional artwork around City parks and along the existing trails.

Goal 3. Continue to improve universal access at all City parks.

Objectives:

- Implement a surfacing program for trails and paths.
- Maintain barrier-free parking spaces at all parks.
- Provide universal access to restrooms and drinking fountains.
- Provide universal access picnic tables when new or replacement tables are purchased.
- Continue to maintain and repair or replace all asphalt for accessibility to all city parks.

Goal 4. Identify opportunities for winter-time recreation.

Objectives:

- Identify, develop, and maintain new cross-country/snow-shoe trails.
- Install a permanent outdoor ice-skating rink.
- Identify and expand sledding and snow tubing locations.
- Winterize the existing disc-golf course.



System-Wide Recommendations

In addition to capital investments into programs and facilities, the City must also evaluate the current system and review long-range options for providing parks and recreation. The following points are system-wide recommendations that should be evaluated annually and used in the long-range planning of parks and recreation within the City of Big Rapids.

Barrier Free Accessibility: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) has established guidelines to provide barrier-free accessibility at public facilities. It is important to provide access to city facilities according to these guidelines so that all residents can enjoy the facilities.

Park Design Improvements: As the park system evolves, and each park undergoes its own degree of improvements, it is important to clearly mark park entrances and visually unify the parks so residents are aware that facilities they enjoy are part of the Big Rapids park system.

Non-Motorized Connectivity: Big Rapids should seek opportunities for planning, land acquisition, access easements, and non-motorized trail development to assist this effort within the community.

Park Promotion: The Parks and Recreation Department should use creative promotional approaches to increase awareness of the features available at various parks. Promotional ideas could include park maps and park events. Increased awareness of the parks will increase appreciation and support for the park system and could also generate a spirit of volunteerism with maintenance, development, and fundraising projects.

Fundraising: Develop new and creative ways to raise funds for park improvements, such as events, service projects and local fundraising. These park improvements could be as small scale as fundraising for benches, trees, or other amenities.

Public Involvement: The Parks and Recreation Department should continue to solicit resident suggestions on planning use, and improvement of park programming. This can be accomplished using public meetings, surveys, or through resident feedback solicited at special events.



Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

The Capital Improvements Program (CIP) is a six-year planning instrument used to identify needs and financing sources for capital improvements, which are projects that result in the acquisition, addition, updating, or development of physical facilities. The purpose of the CIP is to facilitate the orderly planning of these improvements; to maintain, preserve, and protect the city's existing infrastructure system; and to provide for the acquisition or scheduled replacement of equipment to ensure the efficient delivery of services to the community. The projects identified in the CIP represent the community's plan to serve residents and anticipate the needs of a dynamic community.

Parks projects always make up a significant portion of the CIP projects in any given year. Including park improvement projects in the CIP ensures that they are vetted and given formal approval through the public engagement process and allows the City to plan ahead and budget for the expenses of the improvements. The CIP is updated annually; please see the City's website to access the latest CIP and review the Parks projects included therein.



Action Plan Items

Clay Cliffs Nature Area

- Develop the entrance area of Clay Cliffs
- Install and maintain paved trails
- Install signage throughout the nature area
- Develop foot bridges for crossing over creek
- Develop parking lot in northeast corner

Depot Park (Trailhead for the White Pine Trail)

- Install restrooms to accomodate trail users
- Develop a park with a pavilion and ADA accessible picnic tables, community firepits, a water filling station, additional areas to rest, and other trail-related amenities
- Air pump and tire repair station along the White Pine Trail

Hemlock Park and the Bandshell

- Construct a new pavilion
- Repave road and parking lot
- Install irrigation systems on softball field
- Implement additional lighting
- Replace and update playscape/playground equipment
- Construct a small gazebo
- Install a splash pad
- Replace wooden softball lights
- Install ADA accessible changing stalls to complement the use of the splash pad
- Include a sound system and lighting area for the Bandshell
- Plant more trees

Industrial Ball Fields

- Additional lighting on fields
- Refurbish old baseball field for use by baseball or softball league
- Refurbish existing fence
- Complete fencing on back baseball diamond
- Develop restroom facility and parking lot
- Add benches and bleachers to the baseball and soccer fields

Anna Howard Shaw Memorial Park (Library Park)

- Install storyboards along the park sidewalk

Mitchell Creek Park

- Replace southeast corner stairway
- Repair riprap walls
- Implement Phase II of light replacement along alleys
- Improve planing in garden area near gazebo
- Signage to guide patrons from Pocket Park and downtown to Mitchell Creek

Northend Riverside Park / Swede Hill

- Permanent restroom facilities in Northend Park
- Develop a skate park
- Improve access site for tubing and canoeing
- Develop pickleball, basketball, and volleyball courts, soccer fields, softball diamonds, and dog park
- Maintenance and upkeep of the disc golf course
- Additional parking for the disc golf course
- Address riverbank erosion

Win Kellum Ball Field

- Additional lighting on fields
- Refurbish existing fencing

Community Pool

- Install slide for the community pool
- Install gender neutral changing stalls for patrons

Osceola Pavilion

- Install a small playground

River Street Park

- Add sidewalk along Linden Street to Riverwalk
- Extend the south parking lot
- Include a fence along west side of soccer field
- Implement lighting on Riverwalk near fishing pier
- Additional bleachers needed for existing soccer fields
- Repair and replace parking lot near Win Kellum Ball Field

Riverwalk

- Develop Riverwalk Phase IV that will help to connect the Riverwalk to the White Pine Trail
- Replace pavement from Swede Hill to Northend Riverside Park
- Implement solar lighting along the trail
- Incorporate festive lighting and laterns along the trail

Supervisor's Park

- Develop river access

Vogel Fields

- Expand field #2 to a 275-foot outfield fence
- Redesign and pave parking area
- Install lighting
- Develop restrooms
- Update playground



Priority Projects for the Next Five Years

Hemlock Park Improvement Project:

To be completed in 2022

The Hemlock Park Improvement Project will provide outdoor recreation activities for people of all ages and abilities. This municipal recreation space will provide community enrichment and socialization for all demographics offering opportunities for children's sensory and mental growth to develop, and for families to gather and socialize. One of the long-term benefits is the revenue that residents and non-residents will bring into the community before and after their park visit. Attracting people means attracting revenue sources and patronage to local businesses. Patrons eat at restaurants, buy gas, and shop whether they are living in the community or just visiting. Adding inclusive play opportunities for children is another important benefit. Inclusive water play may be one of the only public recreation activities that caters to all ages and abilities. Overall, the Hemlock Park Improvement Project can benefit the community both socially and economically. The five improvements are as follows:

- Splash pad
- Kayak and canoe launch
- Pickleball courts
- Tennis Courts
- Basketball Court

Depot Park Trailhead

Estimated completion of 2022-2023

The Depot Trailhead Project will provide the White Pine Trail with a much needed trailhead. The project will consist of a gravel parking lot, restrooms, picnic areas, a tire repair station, and other amenities that will aid the trail users. This project will accommodate users through all seasons.

Farmer's Market Pavilion with Ice Skating Rink

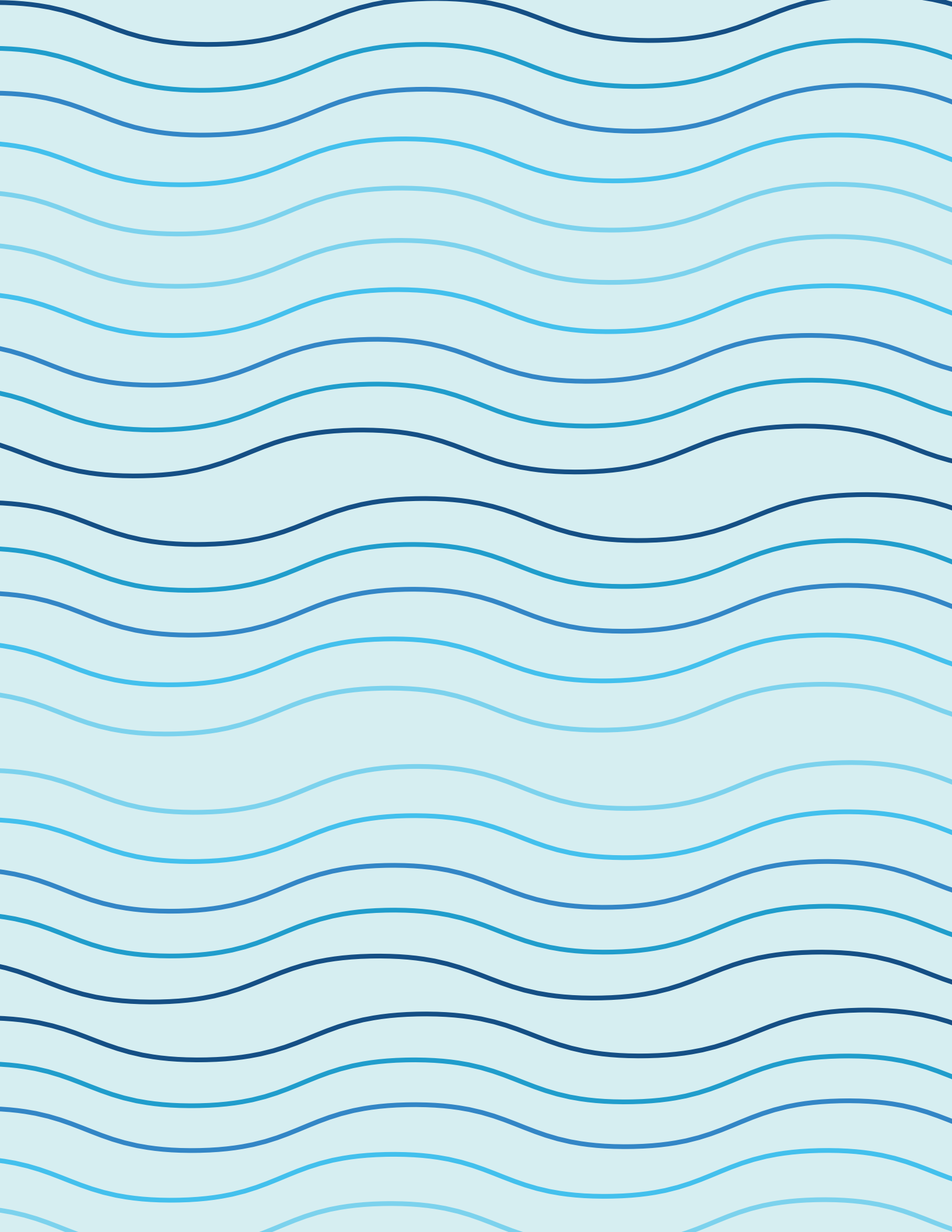
This project is to develop a permanent pavilion in the downtown to house a three-season farmer's market. In the winter, it would transition to a covered, refrigerated ice rink. This new downtown gathering space would be a destination, available for public event rental, and would activate a currently vacant lot in the downtown. Preliminary plans and concept drawings have been created. The high cost of this project is the primary limiting factor and the City will need to find grants and partners to help make this vision a reality for the Big Rapids community.

Skate Park

Community members have expressed interest in the development of a skate park for a number of years. From this interest, City staff have been discussing ways to meet the community's need. A question within the Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan Survey asked respondents to select an initiative they believe the City of Big Rapids should prioritize. The development of a skate park was the most favored initiative chosen by City residents (33% of resident responses). There are several grant opportunities specifically for skate park development that will be explored by City staff.

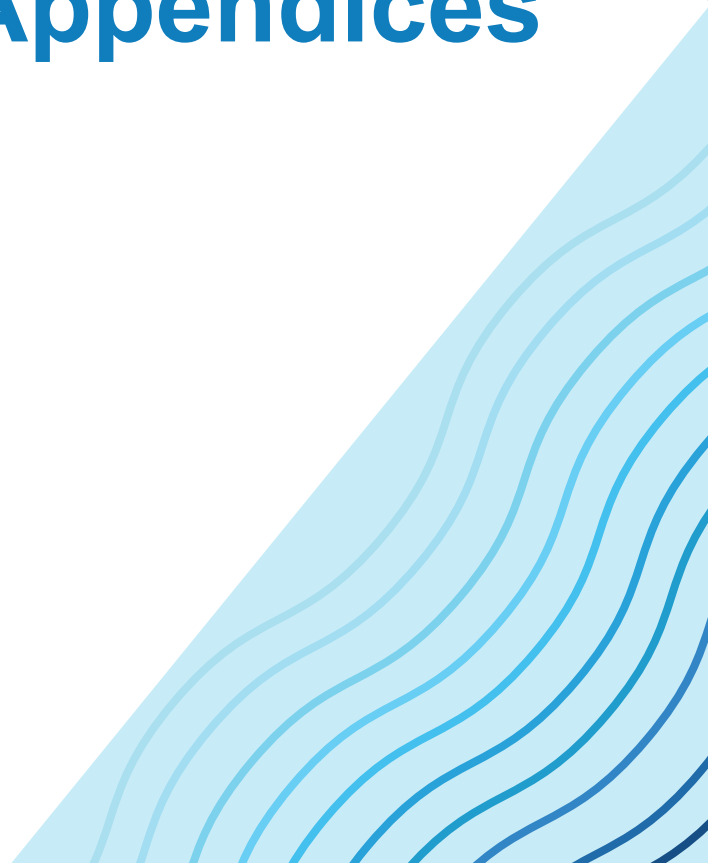
Winter Park Activities

With Michigan experiencing several months of the winter season, winter park activities are necessary for residents to get outside year-round. While the City of Big Rapids offers a few winter activities, there is a critical need to increase the available options. During the Parks and Recreation Community Workshop, City staff designated a station to winter park activities in City limits. Results from this station indicate a need for several winter park activities, including ice skating, snow-shoeing, sledding/snow tubing, and cross-country skiing.





Appendices



Appendix A

Funding Sources

Appendix A: Funding Sources

The proposed recreation improvements proposed in the Six-Year Capital Improvement Plan can be financed with a combination of resources. There are several potential funding sources currently being utilized and many that are available for parks and recreation projects such as parkland improvements and facility upgrades as described below.

General Funding Sources

Millage. A property tax millage can be used to finance specific park and recreation projects or to operate recreation facilities. A millage is an effective way to divide costs over time among all of the taxpayers in the city to provide matching grant funds or finance entire projects. A millage allows more flexibility with how the money is allocated than with a bond.

User Fees. The city can charge reasonable fees to the users of specific recreation facilities and for enrollment in recreation programs. User fees can provide substantial support for park and recreation facilities and programs. Other Michigan communities have established user fees for the use of swimming pools, tennis courts, lighted athletic fields, and indoor facilities.

Recreation Bonds. A number of bond programs can be used to finance construction of parks and recreation facilities. General Obligation Bonds are issued for specific community projects and may not be used for other purposes. These bonds are usually paid for with property tax revenues. Revenue Bonds are issued for construction of public projects that generate revenue. The bonds are then retired by using income generated by the project.

Conservation Easements. A conservation easement is a method of preserving open space that is guaranteed through formal documentation. This technique can also be used to preserve open space if it is not feasible or practical for the city to acquire the land. Rather than obtaining fee simple, or complete ownership, an organization or community can purchase or acquire by gift an easement to the property.

Public-Private or Public-Public Partnerships. Reduced funding for the public and private sector has created a need for various partnerships between public and private entities as well as between two or more public entities to accommodate specialized large-scale recreation demands. The city should seek partnerships with private or non-profit entities where available and when beneficial.

Donations. Businesses, corporations, private clubs, community organizations, and individuals will often contribute to recreation and other improvement programs to benefit communities in which they are located. Private sector contributions may be in the form of monetary contributions, the donation of land, the provision of volunteer services, or the contribution of equipment or facilities.

Foundations. A foundation is a special non-profit legal entity that is established as a mechanism through which land, cash, and securities can be donated for the benefit of parks and recreation services.

Specific Funding Programs

Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund (MNRTF). MNRTF provides funding assistance for the purchase and development of land for public outdoor recreation and natural resource protection. This fund is directed at creating and improving outdoor recreational opportunities and providing protection to valuable natural resources. The available development grants are between \$15,000 and \$500,000 and there is no limit on the amount for acquisition projects because they depend upon the value of the property. A local minimum match of 25% is required for all projects. Applications must be postmarked by April 1st for both acquisition and development projects and August 1st for acquisition projects only.

Each year the Trust Fund Board of Trustees decides on priority project types on which proposals will receive special attention. The special initiatives for 2018 include:

1. Trails (including water trails)
2. Wildlife Habitat, and Hunting Access (acquisition only)
3. Projects within an Urban Area
4. Public Access to the Great Lakes (acquisition only)

Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF). LWCF provides funding assistance for communities to acquire and develop land for public outdoor recreation. This fund is directed at community recreation and trail way improvements that preserve natural resources. A local match of 50% required for all projects, and the minimum request amount is \$30,000 and the maximum is \$75,000. Projects are evaluated based on project need, applicant history, site and project quality, and alignment with the state's recreation plan (2018-2022 Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan). The fourth criterion is determined to be primarily trails, community outdoor recreation, green technology in outdoor recreation, universal access, and coordination and cooperation among recreation providers. The MDNR makes recommendations to the National Park Service (NPS) on which applications to fund, and the NPS grants the final approval. Applications are due March 1st for grants.

Transportation Enhancement (TE) Program. The TE program was originally established with the passage of the federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991, the reauthorization of the TEA-21 program in 1998, and finally the authorization of SAFETEA-LU in 2005 authorizing highway safety, transit and other surface transportation programs, including regional pathways and trail way systems. The TE program is a 10 percent set-aside of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds that are administered by the MDOT Office of Economic Development. Eligible activities include those related to non-motorized transportation, transportation aesthetics, historic preservation, and water quality and wildlife. TE funding requires matching funds of at least 20% of the project cost and must be related to surface transportation.

Urban and Community Forestry Program – Community Forestry Grants. This program provides funds for projects that address the urban forestry needs of municipal governments, schools, nonprofit organizations, and volunteer groups throughout Michigan. These projects may include tree inventories, management plans, tree planting educational workshops and trailing materials, and other maintenance activities. Projects that develop or enhance urban and community forestry resources, such as management and planning, education and training, tree planting, and library resources, are looked upon highly. Applications are due each summer with maximum grant requests of \$20,000.

Community Forestry Program – Arbor Day Mini-Grants. This mini-grant program is designed to provide information and technical assistance to municipal governments and volunteer groups for urban and community forestry activities related to Arbor Day. Projects that develop or enhance urban and community forestry resources, including tree planting on public land, Arbor Day celebrations, and natural resource library reference material acquisition, are looked upon highly. Applications are due each fall with maximum grant requests of \$200.

Appendix B

Resolutions

RESOLUTION NO. 21-161

Commissioner Cochran moved, seconded by Commissioner Simmon, the adoption of the following:

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2022- 2026 CITY OF BIG RAPIDS PARK AND RECREATION 5-YEAR PLAN

WHEREAS, in order to be eligible for MDNR Grants, a community must have a current Park and Recreation 5-Year Plan, and

WHEREAS, the city's current Plan expires at the end of 2021, to keep the Plan from lapsing, a 2022-2026 Plan must be adopted before February 1, 2022, and

WHEREAS, as required by the MDNR, community input was gathered through an online survey, and an in-person Community Workshop was held at City Hall, and

WHEREAS, at the December 9, 2021 Parks and Recreation Board meeting, Staff ensured that all DNR requirements had been met and the Parks and Recreation Board made a motion to recommend the adoption of the 2022-2026 Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan to the City Commission, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held Monday, December 20, 2021 at City Hall, 226 N. Michigan Avenue, Big Rapids, MI, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Park and Recreation Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids has developed the Plan for the benefit of the entire community and to adopt the Plan as a document to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the City of Big Rapids City Commission hereby adopts the 2022-2026 City of Big Rapids Park and Recreation 5-Year Plan as a guideline for improving recreation for the residents of the City of Big Rapids.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

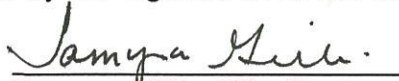
The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated: December 20, 2021

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution No. 21-161 is a true and complete copy of a resolution of the City of Big Rapids duly adopted at a regular meeting of the City Commission of said City held on December 20, 2021.

I further certify that said resolution has been recorded in the Minute Book of the City of Big Rapids and that such recording has been authenticated by the signatures of the Mayor and City Clerk.




Tamyra Gillis, City Clerk
Dated: January 19, 2022

Appendix C

Minutes

**CITY OF BIG RAPIDS
PARK AND RECREATION BOARD
UNPROVED MINUTES
December 9, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Deborah Chipman at 6:28 p.m.

Present: Sandy Gholston, Jennifer Yontz, Foster Neill, Vicky Deur, Deborah Chipman, Scott Herron, Mark Brejcha and Margaret Maynard

Via Zoom: John Sparks and Jennifer Cochran, City Commissioner

Other: Heather Bowman, Public Works Director, Josh Pyles, Recreation Coordinator and Emily Szymanski, Planning and Zoning Technician

MINUTES:

Motion by Vicky Deur, seconded by Margaret Maynard, to approve the minutes from November 11, 2021 as presented. Motion passed.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

None.

COMMUNICATIONS:

None.

GENERAL BUSINESS:

Update Park & Rec 5 Year Plan: Emily thanked the board for their feedback on the early plan draft and for those who attended the Parks & Rec Community Workshop. She noted that she had included all the suggestions and edits from board members in the final draft of the plan. Emily stated that the Parks & Rec 5 Year Plan is required by the Michigan DNR and must follow specific guidelines for what information is included in the document. In addition to the board's review of the draft, it was also reviewed by several others including City of Big Rapids Grant Coordinator Suzanne Wiggins and Vice Chair of the North Chapter of The Friends of the White Pine Trail Paul Griffith. Emily asked that the board make a formal motion to move forward and recommend the Parks & Rec 5 Year Plan to the City Commission.

Motion by Vicky Deur, seconded by Margaret Maynard, to recommend to the city commission to adopt the 5-year plan. Motion passed.

Update Citizenship Award Recognition: Josh reported that he spoke with the editor of the Pioneer who was present at the event regarding getting photos. The editor indicated that his camera disc was corrupted so there are no pictures available. Mark Brejcha stated that he knows a few people who were present and taking pictures. He offered to speak with them to see if they could provide a photo so that the board could attempt to have Pat Horan recognized in the Pioneer's Year End Review.

Hemlock Park Update: Heather informed the board the city has acquired the water/sewer permits needed however now the city needs a wetland permit. The only way around the wetland permit was to move the water/sewer flood plain. The city has reached out to the contractor and they are still interested but will not be able to start the utilities project until early spring when the frost laws come off. The city has also met with Fleis and Vandenbrink and intend to hire them as the General Contractor. F&V are reaching out to their contractors for costs and will get back to the city with a cost package. Hopeful to move forward in the spring. The announcement was made that the city received the Land and Water Conservation Grant of \$238,600 to assist with the Splash Pad.

Library Park Signs: Heather stated Paula Priebe, Community Development Director and Lauren Perkins, Library Director have selected two new signs to be fabricated. One will represent the Anna Howard Shaw Park and the other at the Literacy Playground. These will be installed along with the MDNR Passport sign in hopes be installed by the time of the ribbon cutting ceremony.

STAFF REPORTS: None.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/BUSINESS:

UNSCHEDULED BUSINESS: Heather shared with the board the city has been working closely with Eric Williams, City Attorney and the Snowmobile Club of the White Pine Trail to finalize a plan to allow the club to build a storage building for their equipment near the trail. The location will be near the Bjornson water tower. DTE currently stores their tubing/pipes and may continue however will need to be reorganized and condensed. The final plans are projected to be taken to the city commission and in place by winter of 2022-23.

Heather also shared DPW has been working on CIP'S (Capital Improvement Projects) and have asked for the following project to be approved.

- Hemlock Park – Identify the need of \$100,000 to assist with final costs
- Depot Park - \$75,000 – the 25% match for DNR Trust Fund Grant
- Vogel Field - \$120,000 – additional to assist in lighting project
- Pool – \$30,000 pool deck amenities \$30,000 showers and partitions.

These items are just requests and due to the Census not coming back as expected may be unattainable.

Josh stated he will be going to training for his recertification of his LGI to be able to help FSU upon the reopening of their pool.

The next meeting of the Park and Recreation Board will be January 13, 2022 at 6:30 p.m.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:00 p.m.

Trina Poulos

Board Secretary

City Commission
December 20, 2021

Mayor Fred Guenther called the regular meeting of the City Commission to order at 6:30 p.m.

Present: Commissioners Robert Andrews, Jennifer Cochran, Jonathan Eppley and Karen Simmon; Mayor Fred Guenther; City Manager Mark Gifford; City Attorney Eric D. Williams; City Clerk Tamyra K. Gillis and City Treasurer Aaron Kuhn.

There were ten people who were in attendance.

There were 10 people who dialed in.

ROLL CALL

Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA - 10h (Resolution approving the sale of vacant property on 18 Mile Road) was taken off the agenda and will be presented on the January 3, 2022, commission agenda. Added proclamation recognizing Ferris State University football team under "Special Orders of the Day".

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Simmon moved, seconded by Commissioner Eppley that the minutes of December 6, 2021, regular meeting and December 15th joint meeting be accepted.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

SPECIAL ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROCLAMATION RECOGNITION OF FERRIS STATE UNIVERSITY

Whereas, on December 18, 2021, Ferris State University's Football Team, became the NCAA Division II Football National Champions, and

Whereas, Head Coach Tony Annese led the Ferris State Bulldogs defeating Valdosta St. (GA) by a score of 58-17 to secure the National Championship, and

Whereas, Ferris State Bulldogs Football Team had a record of 14-0 for the 2021 season, and

Whereas, Head Coach Tony Annese and his staff along with an outstanding group of student athletes have made Ferris State Football one of the winningest programs in all of college football.

Therefore, the City Commission of the City of Big Rapids, hereby with Great Pride extend congratulations to Ferris State University's Football Team on their accomplishments as a team and recognize them for their hard work and ability, as well as their team spirit and outstanding representation of the Big Rapids Community.

Dated: December 20, 2021

Mayor Fred Guenther

Commissioner Bob Andrews

Commissioner Jennifer Cochran

Commissioner Jon Eppley

Commissioner Karen Simmon

STUDY SESSION

a. City of Big Rapids Election Audit Results – Marcee Purcell, Mecosta County Clerk spoke on the process of election auditing. The City of Big Rapids was chosen by the State of Michigan to have a post-election audit of the November 2, 2021 election. The County Clerk overseen this audit and looked at procedures that were taken before, day of and after the election. This kind of audit usually takes between an hour to 2 hours, the city's audit only took an hour due to how organized the paperwork was compiled by Ms. Tamyra Gillis and Ms. Amanda Vogel. The city's had a perfect audit.

Ms. Purcell also went over the county's redistricting, which will take effect January 1, 2022. The city will continue to have two county commissioners. District 6 will have most of the City everything west of the river. District 7 will have a small portion on the east side and a large portion of Big Rapids Township. Redistricting members included Ms. Purcell, County Treasurer, Prosecuting Attorney and the Republican and Democratic Chairs.

b. Kent County Recycling Fee Update – Matt Biolette, Republic Services presented a PowerPoint presentation updating the commission on recycling. The recycling and waste industry is still far from normal. People are still working from home and younger workers are not entering the driver industry at a rate high enough to replace an aging driver workforce.

Kent County Recycling facility will increase by \$5.00 per ton effective January 3, 2022.

Mr. Biolette presented the city with a \$2,500 check for the Hemlock Park Improvement Project.

c. Review of 2021 Rules of Procedures – Eric D. Williams, City Attorney commented that the Rules of Procedures need to be adopted by the commission every year. If any member of the commission would like to suggest a change in the rules, please let Mr.

Gifford know. Anytime in the course of the year these rules can be amended. If a consent agenda is considered in the future, the process would be placed in these rules.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joseph Kasbohm would like the city to review the city's parking ordinance in regard to "no parking on any street between 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m." He would like it changed to even and odd parking so people could still park on the street. He just moved into the city and has had problems with his vehicle being blocked in. The snow plow comes through and leaves a pile of snow in people's driveway. They could attach a snow boot to the plow and an arm comes down and stops the snow when they approach a driveway.

Becky Kibler spoke on the vacant lot on Madison Avenue that the city put up for sale. Ms. Kibler and her husband put in an offer, which the city accepted and bought the property. She was informed that the neighbor wanted five more feet of land and was granted the five feet. She was then informed that was not going to happen, that the city was going to recognize the mistake and offer the neighbors \$5,000 instead. Today she went to a meeting with an offer of 61 feet of road frontage, but the Big Rapids Township says it must be 66 feet. If it stays at 61 feet, the only people who can purchase the land are the surrounding six property owners. The neighbors who tried to get the five feet also tried to buy the Kiblers out of their contract. The neighbors made it very clear that they want property. The Kiblers have been dealing with this for three months and they still have no clear answers, they are very frustrated. She wondered why the land was put up for sale if it could not be sold free and clear.

Ms. Nichole Nagy, Ms. Kibler's realtor found out today that the city did not want to fight for the five feet of property and wondered why... the city owns the land why not fight for it.

Bill Stanek, BR Township Supervisor, commented that the township's ordinance requires 66 feet, and it has to be a road not a driveway. Any property with that zoning in the township has to be 165 foot of road frontage. In order to get 165 foot of road frontage you have to put a road in, and a road requires 66-foot driveway. That is why that property is divided up that way. The township could not split the property for Ms. Kibler because that would make it an illegal parcel. The only to do it now is if the deed shows 66 feet.

Mayor Guenther will refer this issue to Mark Gifford, City Manager and Eric Williams the City Attorney.

Jerry Garner, realtor asked why the resolution approving the sale of vacant property on 18 Mile Road parcel was removed from tonight's agenda. Mr. Gifford explained that the city received multiple offers on this piece of land with one coming in today. Being a public body, the city needs time to review these offers and to present them to the City Commission with enough time for them to adequately review them as well. With one offer coming to today, there was not enough time to review. Mayor Guenther was informed about the offers today and was not comfortable with presenting them at the meeting tonight.

Mr. Garner asked what the process is moving forward. Mr. Williams explained that staff will review the offers and present them to the commission with a recommendation at the next City Commission meeting.

Jim Dunkle asked why the public can't see the offers. Mr. McNally explained that the offers can only be released by the buyer which rarely happens.

Kati Ross put in an offer on this piece of land a month ago, but it was never presented to the commission. She feels slighted by the city, if her offer had been presented to the commission sooner, she would already own the property. Now she has to compete with three other people.

Mr. Gifford commented that he appreciated Kati and her family and all the help that they do for the community. He did receive her offer just days before the commission meeting, but the city runs slow, which is the normal course of business. Cities are not run like real estate businesses.

Ms. Ross suggested having special meetings when city property goes up for sale.

PUBLIC HEARING

- a. Public Hearing to review Special Assessment Roll No. 21-526 for the 2020/2021 Sidewalk Improvement Project.

Mayor Guenther opened the Public Hearing to review Special Assessment Roll No. 21-526 for the 2020/2021 Sidewalk Improvement Project at 7:15 p.m. Mayor Guenther opened the floor for comments from the audience. There were no persons in the audience who spoke for or against the special assessment. There were no written or telephonic correspondence.

The public hearing was closed at 7:16 p.m.

- b. Public Hearing to review the 2022-2026 Park and Recreation Master Plan.

Mayor Guenther opened the Public Hearing to review the 2022-2026 Park and Recreation Master Plan at 7:16 p.m.

In order to be eligible for MDNR Grants, a community must have a current Park and Recreation 5-Year Plan. The current Plan expires at the end of this year, so to keep the Plan from lapsing, a 2022-2026 Plan must be adopted before February 1, 2022.

Community Development Staff have been working on the City's 2022-2026 Parks & Recreation 5-Year Plan since late 2020 with help from the Park and Recreation Board. As required by the MDNR, community input was gathered through an online survey, and at an in-person Community Workshop held at City Hall.

Staff presented the final Plan during the December 9, 2021 Parks and Recreation Board meeting and has ensured that all DNR requirements have been met. The Parks and Recreation Board made a motion to recommend the adoption of the 2022-2026 Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan to the City Commission.

Mayor Guenther opened the floor for comments from the audience. There were no persons in the audience who spoke for or against the 2022-2026 Park and Recreation Master Plan. There were no written or telephonic correspondence.

The public hearing was closed at 7:20 p.m.

GENERAL BUSINESS

RESOLUTION NO. 21-160

Commissioner Eppley moved, seconded by Commissioner Cochran, the adoption of the following:

RESOLUTION ADOPTING AMENDED SPECIAL ASSESSMENT ROLL NO. 21-526 FOR 2020/2021 SIDEWALK IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

WHEREAS, the City Commission approved Special Assessment Roll No. 21-526 on May 10, 2021, and

WHEREAS, the actual costs of the completed project were different than the estimated costs and the actual footages installed were different for some of the parcels than the original estimates, and

WHEREAS, the City Assessor or his/her designate prepared an amended Special Assessment Roll No. 21-526 to reflect actual unit costs and actual square footages, and

WHEREAS, the Big Rapids City Commission held a public hearing on December 20, 2021, to consider any objections to said amended roll, at which time the amended special assessments were confirmed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission hereby approves said amended Special Assessment Roll No. 21-526 to be spread over a three (3) year term payable in three (3) annual installments with interest at three percent (3%) per annum due each February 1st, beginning February 1, 2022, and directs the City Assessor to deposit said amended roll with the City Clerk for endorsement as to the date of confirmation.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that upon confirmation by the City Clerk, said roll shall be transmitted to the City Treasurer for collection.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated: December 20, 2021

I hereby certify that the foregoing resolution is a true and complete copy of a resolution of the City of Big Rapids duly adopted at a regular meeting of the City Commission of said City held on December 20, 2021.

I further certify that said resolution has been recorded in the Minute Book of the City of Big Rapids and that such recording has been authenticated by the signatures of the Mayor and City Clerk.

Tamyra Gillis, City Clerk
Dated: December 27, 2021

RESOLUTION NO. 21-161

Commissioner Cochran moved, seconded by Commissioner Simmon, the adoption of the following:

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2022- 2026 CITY OF BIG RAPIDS PARK AND RECREATION 5-YEAR PLAN

WHEREAS, in order to be eligible for MDNR Grants, a community must have a current Park and Recreation 5-Year Plan, and

WHEREAS, the city's current Plan expires at the end of 2021, to keep the Plan from lapsing, a 2022-2026 Plan must be adopted before February 1, 2022, and

WHEREAS, as required by the MDNR, community input was gathered through an online survey, and an in-person Community Workshop was held at City Hall, and

WHEREAS, at the December 9, 2021 Parks and Recreation Board meeting, Staff ensured that all DNR requirements had been met and the Parks and Recreation Board made a motion to recommend the adoption of the 2022-2026 Parks and Recreation 5-Year Plan to the City Commission, and

WHEREAS, a public hearing was held Monday, December 20, 2021 at City Hall, 226 N. Michigan Avenue, Big Rapids, MI, to provide an opportunity for citizens to express opinions, ask questions, and discuss all aspects of the Park and Recreation Master Plan, and

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids has developed the Plan for the benefit of the entire community and to adopt the Plan as a document to assist in meeting the recreation needs of the community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the City of Big Rapids City Commission hereby adopts the 2022-2026 City of Big Rapids Park and Recreation 5-Year Plan as a guideline for improving recreation for the residents of the City of Big Rapids.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon
Nays: None
The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.
Dated: December 20, 2021

RESOLUTION NO. 21-162

Commissioner Eppley moved, seconded by Commissioner Simmon, the adoption of the following:

**RESOLUTION ACCEPTING THE 2022 BIG RAPIDS
WASTEWATER USER CHARGE SYSTEM REPORT AND
AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO SIGN**

WHEREAS representatives from the City of Big Rapids, Big Rapids Township and Green Township [the “Municipalities”] have met in committee to complete the 2022 User Charge Report [the “Report”], and

WHEREAS the Report identifies City accounts utilized to quantify and track shared expenses in the operation of the wastewater treatment plant and collection system, and sets the methodology of preparing the User Charge System Report, and

WHEREAS, the information about the collection system and treatment plant serving the Municipalities set forth in the Report will be used in the setting of wastewater rates and the preparation of future user charge system reports.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission accepts the 2022 Big Rapids Wastewater User Charge System Report as prepared by the participating municipalities, subject to the approval by the State of Michigan, Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Sciences and Services Division, and the Mayor is authorized to accept and sign the Report on behalf of the City.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the rates established by the 2022 Report to be charged Big Rapids Township effective January 1, 2022, shall be \$5.33 per unit (1 unit = 1,000 gallons) and the rate charged to Green Township effective January 1, 2022 shall be \$5.20 per unit (1 unit = 1,000 gallons) exclusive of IPP charges as provided in this report.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated: December 20, 2021

RESOLUTION NO. 21-163

Commissioner Andrews moved, seconded by Commissioner Simmon, the adoption of the following:

**RESOLUTION ADOPTING AGREEMENT WITH MID-MICHIGAN COMMUNITY
ACTION FOR A UTILITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM**

WHEREAS, the City has been approached by Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency about partnering for a utility assistance program to provide utility assistance to low-income households that are delinquent on their utility bills, and

WHEREAS, for a customer to be eligible to participate in the program, their account must be in arrears or in shutoff status and they must be under 150% of the

Federal Poverty Limit and/or receiving other forms of government assistance including Social Security Supplemental Income, Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program, State Emergency Relief, etc., and

WHEREAS, this program would provide valuable assistance to those struggling to make timely utility payments.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission approve the attached Memorandum of Understanding with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services and the Mid-Michigan Community Action Agency.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated: December 20, 2021

RESOLUTION NO. 21-164

Commissioner Andrews moved, seconded by Commissioner Eppley, the adoption of the following:

PERFORMANCE RESOLUTION FOR GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids hereinafter referred to as the "GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY", periodically applies to the Michigan Department of Transportation, hereinafter referred to as the "DEPARTMENT", for permits, referred to as "PERMIT," to construct, operate, use and/or maintain utilities or other facilities, or to conduct other activities, on, over, and under state highway right of way at various locations within and adjacent to its corporate limits;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the DEPARTMENT granting such PERMIT, the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY agrees that:

1. Each party to this Agreement shall remain responsible for any claims arising out of their own acts and/or omissions during the performance of this Agreement, as provided by law. This Agreement is not intended to increase either party's liability for, or immunity from, tort claims, nor shall it be interpreted, as giving either party hereto a right of indemnification, either by Agreement or at law, for claims arising out of the performance of this Agreement.
2. If any of the work performed for the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY is performed by a contractor, the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY shall require its contractor to hold harmless, indemnify and defend in litigation, the State of Michigan, the DEPARTMENT and their agents and employees', against any claims for damages to ;public or private property and for injuries to person arising out of the performance of the work ,except for claims that result from the sole negligence or willful acts of the DEPARTMENT, until the contractor achieves final acceptance of the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. Failure of the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY to require its contractor to indemnify the DEPARTMENT, as set forth above, shall be considered a breach of its duties to the DEPARTMENT.

3. Any work performed for the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY by a contractor or subcontractor will be solely as a contractor for the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY and not as a contractor or agent of the DEPARTMENT. The DEPARTMENT shall not be subject to any obligations or liabilities by vendors and contractors of the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY, or their subcontractors or any other person not a party to the PERMIT without the DEPARTMENT'S specific prior written consent and notwithstanding the issuance of the PERMIT. Any claims by any contractor or subcontractor will be the sole responsibility of the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY.

4. The GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY shall take no unlawful action or conduct, which arises either directly or indirectly out of its obligations, responsibilities, and duties under the PERMIT which results in claims being asserted against or judgment being imposed against the State of Michigan, the Michigan Transportation Commission, the DEPARTMENT, and all officers, agents and employees thereof and those contracting governmental bodies performing permit activities for the DEPARTMENT and all officers, agents, and employees thereof, pursuant to a maintenance contract. In the event that the same occurs, for the purposes of the PERMIT, it will be considered as a breach of the PERMIT thereby giving the State of Michigan, the DEPARTMENT, and/or the Michigan Transportation Commission a right to seek and obtain any necessary relief or remedy, including, but not by way of limitation, a judgment for money damages.

5. The GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY will, by its own volition and/or request by the DEPARTMENT, promptly restore and/or correct physical or operating damages to any State highway right of way resulting from the installation construction, operation and/or maintenance of the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCIES facilities according to a PERMIT issued by the DEPARTMENT.

6. With respect to any activities authorized by PERMIT, when the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY requires insurance on its own or its contractor's behalf it shall also require that such policy include as named insured the State of Michigan, the Transportation Commission, the DEPARTMENT, and all officers, agents, and employees thereof and those governmental bodies performing permit activities for the DEPARTMENT and all officers, agents, and employees thereof, pursuant to a maintenance contract.

7. The incorporation by the DEPARTMENT of this resolution as part of a PERMIT does not prevent the DEPARTMENT from requiring additional performance security or insurance before issuance of a PERMIT.

8. This resolution shall continue in force from this date until cancelled by the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY or the DEPARTMENT with no less than thirty (30) days prior written notice to the other party. It will not be cancelled or otherwise terminated by the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY with regard to any PERMIT which has already been issued or activity which has already been undertaken.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the following position[s] are authorized to apply to the DEPARTMENT for the necessary permit to work within state highway right of way on behalf of the GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY.

Name	Title
Heather Bowman	Public Works Director

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated: December 20, 2021

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution No. 21-164 is a true and complete copy of a resolution of the City of Big Rapids duly adopted at a regular meeting of the City Commission of said City held on December 20, 2021.

I further certify that said resolution has been recorded in the Minute Book of the City of Big Rapids and that such recording has been authenticated by the signatures of the Mayor and City Clerk.

Tamyra Gillis, City Clerk

Dated: December 27, 2021

RESOLUTION NO. 21-165

Commissioner Eppley moved, seconded by Commissioner Andrews, the adoption of the following:

RESOLUTION EXTENDING AGREEMENT WITH MCNALLY ENTERPRISES LLC DBA RE/MAX TOGETHER FOR THE CITY'S COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE AGENT/BROKER

WHEREAS, the City per Resolution No. 21-22, dated March 1, 2021, awarded McNally Enterprises LLC DBA Re/Max Together as the City's commercial real estate agent/broker, and

WHEREAS, the agreement allows for the extension of the agreement for one-year periods by agreement of both parties, and

WHEREAS, Joe McNally has contacted the city to express his interest in extending the agreement for another year.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission authorize the one-year extension of the agreement with McNally Enterprises LLC DBA Re/Max Together for a period of January 1, 2022 through December 31, 2022.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated: December 20, 2021

RESOLUTION NO. 21-166

Commissioner Andrews moved, seconded by Commissioner Cochran, the adoption of the following:

**RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING AND APPROVING THE CITY'S
PARTICIPATION IN THE DISTRIBUTOR AND JANSSEN
CLASS ACTION SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT**

WHEREAS, there is a global settlement amount of \$21 billion in a class action case involving the State of Michigan and its participating political subdivisions, one of which is the City of Big Rapids, and

WHEREAS, the City of Big Rapids is listed as an Eligible Subdivision for participation in the Distributor/Janssen Settlements at 0.0245076907%, and

WHEREAS, settlement proceeds will have to be spent on opioid remediation programs identified in the settlement agreements, and

WHEREAS, the City Attorney recommends that the City Commission authorize and approve the City's participation in the opioid class action settlement.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the City Commission authorizes and approves the City's participation in the Distributor and Janssen Class Action Settlement Agreement through the State of Michigan, and authorizes City Manager Mark Gifford to sign all of the documents necessary to participate in the settlement, including but not limited to the Subdivision Settlement Participation Form.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the resolution adopted.

Dated: December 20, 2021

ORDINANCE NO. 778-12-21

Commissioner Eppley moved, supported by Commissioner Andrews, the adoption of the following Ordinance.

**ORDINANCE AMENDING SEVERAL SECTIONS IN TITLE IX
CHAPTER 91 OF THE BIG RAPIDS CITY CODE ON ANIMALS**

WHEREAS, Chapter 91 of the Big Rapids City Code includes regulations on the keeping of dogs, cats, and other animals within the City, and

WHEREAS, several sections in Chapter 91 need to be updated to address current circumstances in the City of Big Rapids, and

WHEREAS, the City Staff reviewed Chapter 91 and recommends amendments to Sections 91.01, 91.02, 91.06, 91.07, 91.11, 91.21, 91.22, 91.24, 91.25, 91.26, 91.27, 91.28, and 91.35, with a new section 91.11 on exotic animals,

NOW, THEREFORE, THE CITY OF BIG RAPIDS ORDAINS:

Section 1. Chapter 91 of Title IX is hereby amended as provided below.

Section 91.01 Goats and Swine Prohibited is amended to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful for any person to keep live goats or swine on any premises within the City; ~~except in slaughterhouses or yards adjacent thereto; and as required to conduct the weekly stock sale.~~

Section 91.02 Animals Prohibited; Exceptions is amended to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful for any person to keep any animal or fowl except chickens within 500 feet of any dwelling, street, alley or public place; or permit any animal or any fowl owned by him/her or in his/her possession or control to run at large in any street, alley or public place, or upon the premises of another without express permission of the owner or occupant thereof, except such animals as are commonly kept or housed as household pets.

Section 91.06 Poisonous Substances Prohibited is amended to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful to throw or deposit poisoned meat, or any poison or harmful substances which is likely to cause disease or death in any street, alley or public place, or on any private premises within the City, for the purpose of destroying any dog, cat, bird, ~~fowl~~ or other animal.

Section 91.07 Feeding Required is amended to read as follows:

~~It shall be unlawful to feed any animal unwholesome or unsuitable food, or unclean water to drink which is likely to cause or produce disease in the animal.~~

Section 91.11 Exotic/Wild Animals is adopted to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful for any person to harbor or permit to harbor, any exotic or wild animal, except as authorized by law license in a zoo, circus, laboratory, veterinary clinic, or similar business. For the purpose of this chapter, HARBOR is the act of owning, maintain, or keeping an animal on any part of a person's premises while providing food and/or shelter to that animal.

Exotic/wild animals defined: Any undomesticated animal or any dangerous animal normally classified as wild. In addition, this specifically includes, but is not limited to, the following animals: non-domestically bred parrots, parakeets or other exotic birds, Canada geese, alligators, bears, birds of prey, monkeys, panthers, cougars, lions, wolves, coyotes, chimpanzees, venomous or constrictor reptiles, and wild felines. In addition, it shall include any hybrid between a wild animal and a domesticated animal, such as a hybrid between a dog and a wolf, a dog and a coyote, a cat and a bobcat, or other wild felines.

Section 91.21 Impounding Dogs; Disposition is amended to read as follows:

It shall be the duty of the Police Department or ~~Dog Warden~~ Animal Control Officer to seize and impound any dog found anywhere in the City contrary to the provisions of this subchapter: and transport the dog to the local animal control shelter. The Police Department or Animal Control Officer shall maintain a complete record of all dogs

~~**impounded under the provisions of this subchapter.** No dog as impounded shall be released to its owner or other authorized person without payment of the sum of \$5 plus \$1 per dog for board to the Police Department or Dog Warden for its care and maintenance and without procuring a license as herein provided. The Police Department or dog warden shall, within 72 hours after impounding any dog, destroy such animal or if it is deemed valuable, sell it to any person the dog warden believes will properly care for such dog.~~

Section 91.22 Records Required is repealed and deleted:

~~The Police Department or Dog Warden shall maintain a complete record of all dogs impounded under the provisions of this subchapter and the disposition of same.~~

Section 91.24 Report to Police is amended to read as follows:

If any person is bitten by a dog, it shall be the duty of that person, or the owner or custodian of the dog having knowledge of ~~same~~ **the dog bite**, to report ~~same~~ **it** to the Police Department or ~~Dog Warden~~ **Animal Control Officer** within 12 hours thereafter. If the owner or custodian of any dog has any reason to believe or suspect that ~~such~~ **the** dog has become infected with rabies, it shall be the duty of that person to report the same to the Police Department or ~~Dog Warden~~ **Animal Control Officer** within 12 hours, ~~thereafter.~~

Section 91.25 Quarantine is amended to read as follows:

In the event of any report as set forth in § 91.24, the Police Department or ~~dog warden~~ **Animal Control Officer** shall seize such dog and deliver it to the ~~Health Officer~~ **local animal control shelter**. The ~~Health Officer~~ **local animal control shelter** shall hold such ~~the~~ dog in quarantine until a laboratory analysis by a licensed veterinarian is made to determine whether the dog is infected. ~~The Health Officer shall promulgate and adopt such rules as he deems necessary for the procedure in all such cases and for the disposition of any dog delivered into his custody.~~

Section 91.26 Leash Required is amended to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful for the owner, or any other person having the possession, care, custody or control thereof, to permit any dog to run at large upon the public streets, walks, parks, or other public places within the City, unless such dog shall be attached to a leash of sufficient strength to restrain ~~the~~ such dog in such ~~and~~ manner as to be kept **keep the dog** under the control of the person accompanying it.

Section 91.27 Barking, Howling is amended to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful for any person to own, harbor or keep any dog which shall cause ~~a~~ **annoyance** or disturbance to persons by **unreasonable** frequent and **loud** habitual barking, howling or yelping.

Section 91.28 Vicious Dogs is amended to read as follows:

It shall be unlawful for any person to ~~suffer or~~ permit a vicious, fierce or dangerous dog to go unconfined and unrestrained on ~~such~~ **the** person's premises, or to run at large.

Section 91.35 Regulation of Cats is amended to read as follows:

(A) It shall be unlawful for any person in the City to **harbor** ~~have possession or custody~~ of any cat without having it under control and/or confined to his/her premises at all times; provided, that the ~~terms provisions~~ of this division ~~provision~~ shall not apply to possession or custody of any cat less than four months of age, when proof of age can be ~~and on request~~ is submitted to a Police Officer. **For the purpose of this section, HARBOR is the act of owning, maintaining, or keeping an animal on a person's premises while providing food and shelter to that animal.**

(B) It shall be unlawful for any person to refuse to show or exhibit, at any reasonable time, any cat in his/her possession or custody to any Police Officer or ~~Dog Warden~~ **Animal Control Officer.** ~~of the City.~~

(C) It shall be unlawful for any person in the City to possess, harbor, shelter or keep more than three adult cats, excepting veterinary hospitals and pet shops. For the purpose of this subchapter, an ADULT CAT shall be deemed to be any cat ~~six~~ **four** months old or older. ~~It shall also be unlawful to maintain any cat or cats so as to create a nuisance by way of noise, odor or otherwise,~~

(D) Any Police Officer or other person, designated by the City, is authorized to impound any cat found running at large within the City. **and transport the cat to the local animal shelter.** ~~In the event capture cannot be effected, the Police Officer or such other person is authorized to destroy such cat.~~

(E) ~~Any impounded cat not redeemed within 72 hours shall be disposed of in such a manner as prescribed for impounded dogs in § 91.21. A minimum daily charge of \$1 dollar per day shall be made for feeding and shelter of each cat, so impounded.~~ **It shall be unlawful to feed or harbor feral or stray cats. It shall be unlawful to feed, harbor, or maintain any domesticated or feral cat that create a nuisance by noise, odor, insects, or excrement.**

Section 2. This ordinance shall be effective 30 days after publication.

Section 3. The City Clerk is directed to publish this ordinance or a summary of this ordinance in The Pioneer.

Yeas: Andrews, Cochran, Eppley, Guenther, Simmon

Nays: None

The Mayor declared the ordinance adopted.

Date: December 20, 2021

Published: December 28, 2021

UNSCHEDULED BUSINESS

- There will be a work session on January 3, 2022. Topic will be City Attorney appointment discussion.

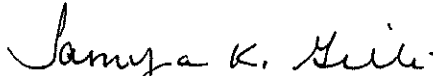
- Public Works and Public Safety will be closed on December 23rd and 24th for the Christmas holiday.
- Commissioner Cochran commented that it would be helpful if the commission was briefed on issues that may be coming before them at a meeting.

WORK SESSION – None

There being no further business to come before the City Commission, Commissioner Cochran moved with a second by Commissioner Eppley that the meeting be adjourned at 7:40 p.m.



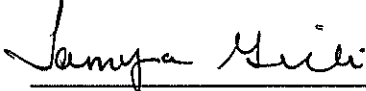
Mayor Fred Guenther



Tamyra K. Gillis, City Clerk

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and complete copy of the minutes of the City of Big Rapids duly adopted at a regular meeting of the City Commission of said City held on January 3, 2022.

I further certify that said minutes are recorded in the Minute Book of the City of Big Rapids and that such recording has been authenticated by the signatures of the Mayor and City Clerk.



Tamyra Gillis, City Clerk

Dated: January 25, 2022

Appendix D
Public Comments

Paul Griffith, Vice Chair Northern Chapter Friends of the White Pine Trail

Mr. Paul Griffith called Emily Szymanski, Planning & Zoning Technician for the City of Big Rapids, and gave the following comments:

- Under Goal 4. Identify opportunities for winter-time recreation. Instead of “develop new cross-country trails” the sentence should read “Identify, develop, and maintain new cross-country and snowshoe trails”.
- Page 55, “Action Items” under “the Riverwalk” should include festive lighting and lanterns around the trail to enhance safety, lighting, and attractiveness. Also include solar lighting to save on cost and increase efficiency.
- Page 56, “Priority Projects” under “Winter Park Activities” should include snowshoeing.

Jeffrey Abel, Mecosta County Park Commission Superintendent

Emily Szymanski

From: Jeffrey Abel
Sent: Friday, December 10, 2021 1:46 PM
To: Emily Szymanski
Subject: Big Rapids Parks Masterplan
Attachments: NCTC_DragonMap_DEC2021_update-web.jpg

Hi Emily,

I’ve been asked by a few of our County Park Commission members to complete a quick review of the City’s 2022-2026 Draft Rec. Plan.

Understandably, I see that there is not a lot of information related to county park offerings in the plan as unfortunately none of our County Parks are within the City Limits, however I would like to make a few recommendations based on the paragraph listed.

First, we are thankful for the compliment in that the County Parks offer excellent recreational opportunities.

The paragraph mentions 4 parks, however our inventory and footprint are much bigger than just those 4 parks. Below is a chart from our Parks Plan that you could utilize if desired to show the County Park footprint:

Regional Parks and Recreational Facilities

Accessibility Legend

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 of universal design

Mecosta County Parks - County Recreation		Size	Accessibility	Service Area	Camping	Picnicking	Playgrounds	Swimming	Hunting	Fishing	Restroom	Shower	Shelters	Concessions	Boat Launch	Nature Area	Athletic Field	Court Games	Winter Sports	Water Sports	Programming	Trails	Golf Course	Indoor Sports	Historical Site	Group Camps
1	Brower County Park	280	3	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X		X	X	X			X	X	X			X	X	X				
2	Davis Bridge County Park	5.6	3	Central & Lower Michigan Counties		X				X	X				X	X										
3	Haymarsh Lake State Campground	30	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X			X	X	X				X	X			X	X		X				X
4	Merrill-Gorrel County Park	90	1	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X		X				
5	Paris County Park	40	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X		X	X		X				X			X	X
6	School Section Lake Veteran's County Park	85	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		X	X	X			X	X
7	Tubbs Lake State Forest Campground	15	2	Central & Lower Michigan Counties	X	X		X	X	X	X				X	X				X		X				
8	White Pine Valley County Recreation Area	200	1	Central & Lower Michigan Counties												X			X		X					

The next sentence states that all parks are closed during the winter months, however we do offer a wide range of winter sport access opportunities. Brower Park has opened last winter and remains open for year round access including utilization of the boat launches, ice fishing opportunities, and access to Michigan's Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam for Fat Tire Biking, Cross Country Skiing, Snowshoeing and more. Davis Bridge Park remains open year-round offering all of the same opportunities as Brower Park. The White Pine Valley Recreation Area is available year-round offering trail access and public hunting opportunities. Haymarsh State Game Area for which we manage access and amenities is the most popular ice fishing destination in the county and offers year-round camping opportunities. Paris Park, though closed to camping acts as a trailhead for the White Pine Trail and provides access for all trail users and snowmobilers.

I'm not sure about the paragraph titled "Pere Marquette State Forest." To my knowledge the Haymarsh State Game Area is unrelated to the Pere Marquette State Forest and the Martiny Lakes State Game Area is an additional separate entity.

It has also been asked if Michigan's Dragon Trail at Hardy Dam could be incorporated into your recreation inventory. I've attached a map of the current construction progress of this eventual 47-mile trail system. Additional information can be found at www.thedragon.us

Our recreation plan was just updated last year, so it is a fairly up to date resource to utilize regarding regional recreational opportunities if you think that to be helpful. The plan can be viewed

at: https://www.mecostacountyparks.com/uploads/9/2/6/3/92633552/mecosta_parks_and_rec_plan_2021-2025_final.pdf

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions and feedback. We love the recreational opportunities offered through the city and are excited to see the projects currently in the works completed and available for visitors.

Feel free to reach out to me anytime if you feel I can be of assistance.

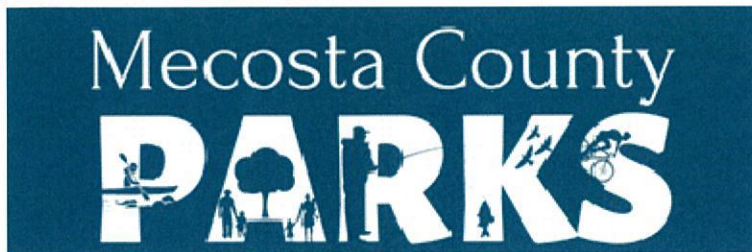
Sincerely,

Jeff Abel

Superintendent - Mecosta County Park Commission

Office - (231)-832-3246

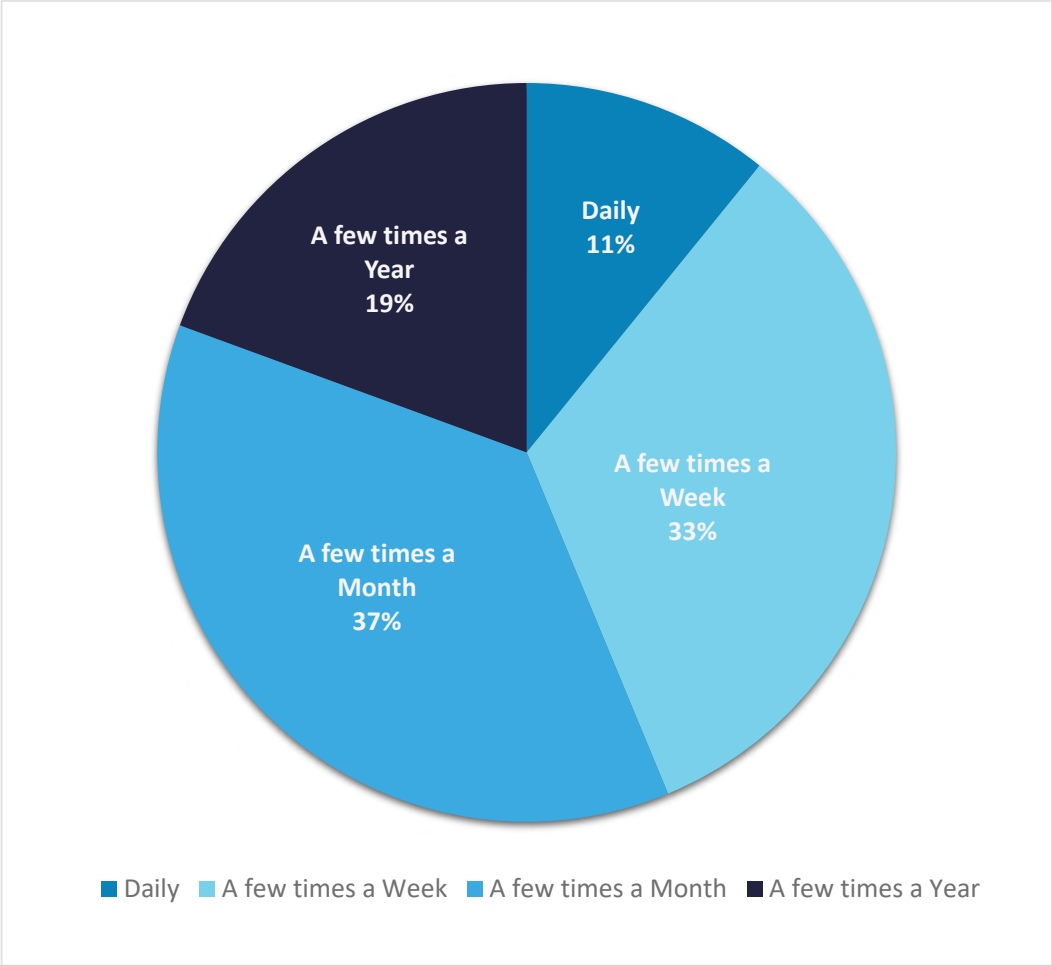
www.MecostaCountyParks.com



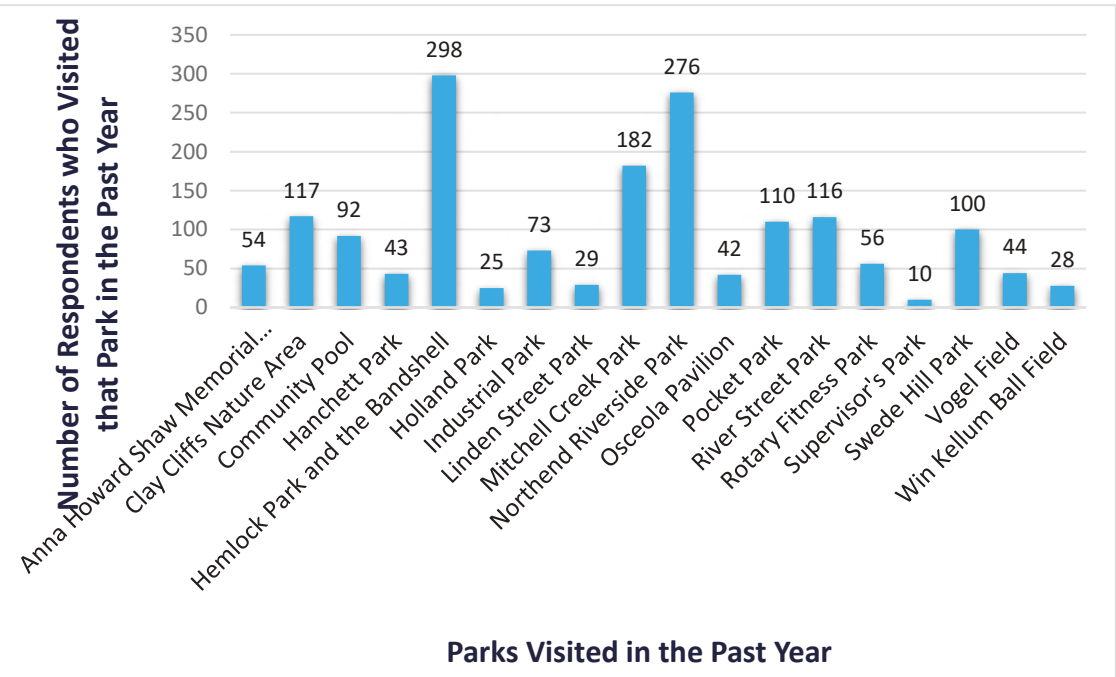
The information contained in this email message is intended solely for the use of the intended recipient. Copying of this message, or any attachments, is prohibited. If you believe you have received this email in error please delete it.

Appendix E Survey Results

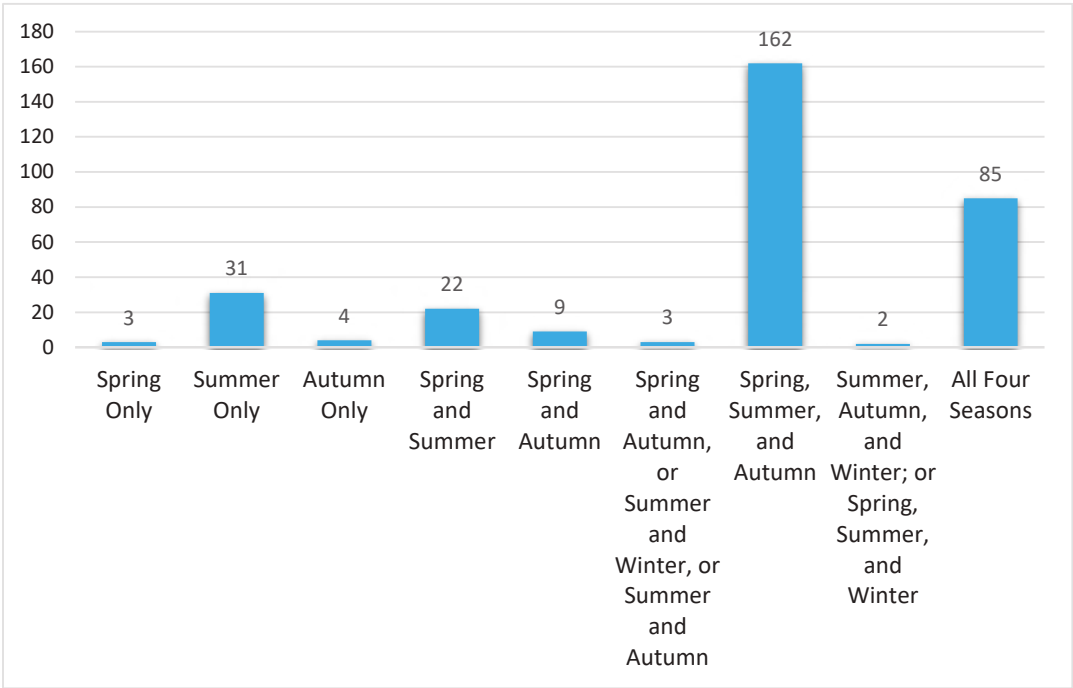
How often do you visit City Parks?



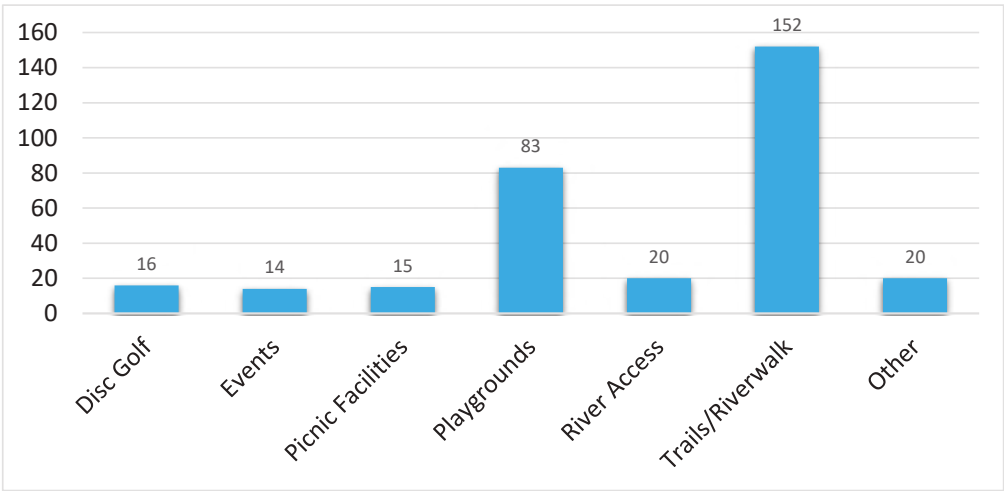
Which parks have you visited in the past year?



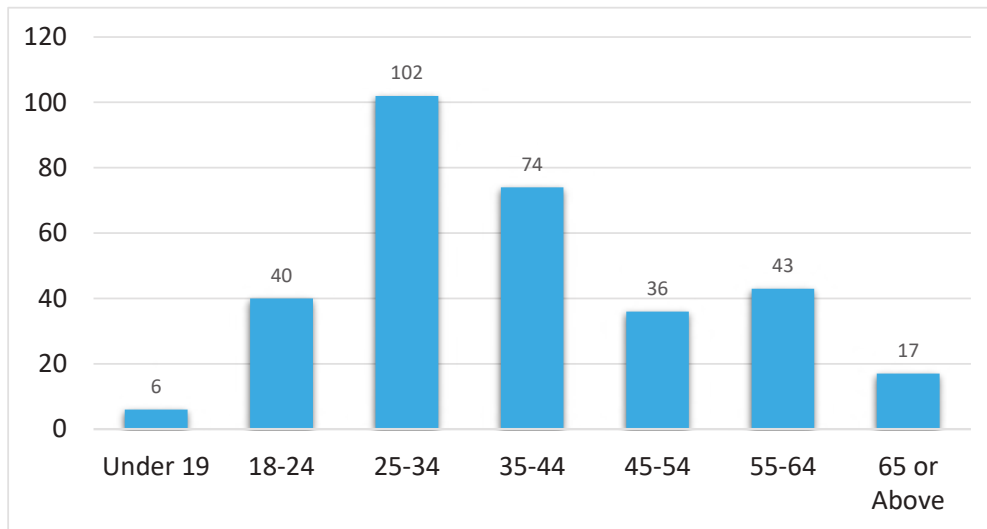
**In what seasons do you visit parks in the City of Big Rapids?
(Please check all that apply)**



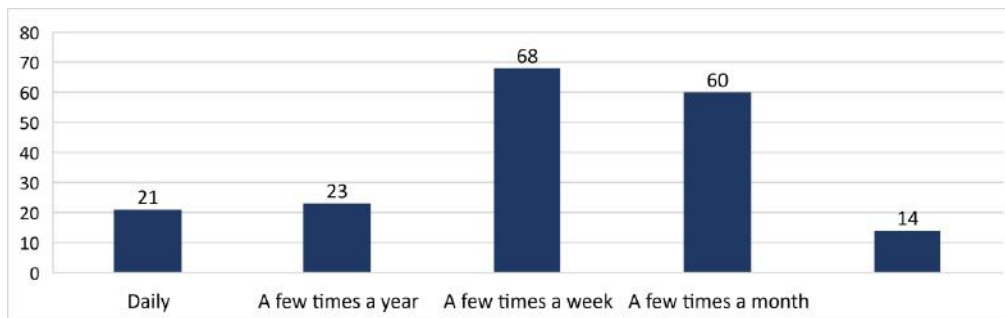
What is the top amenity you go to a park to access?



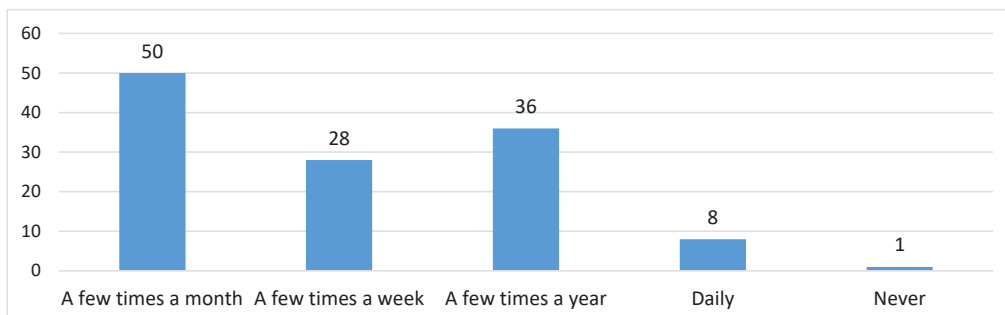
Age of Respondents



How frequently do you visit parks?

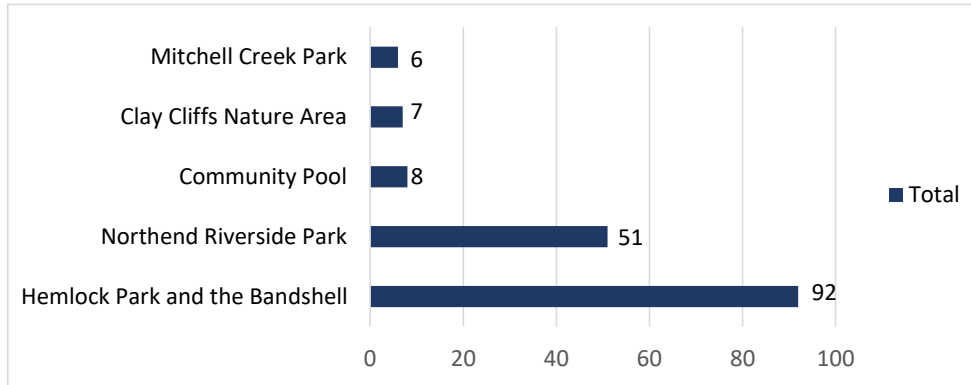


Resident

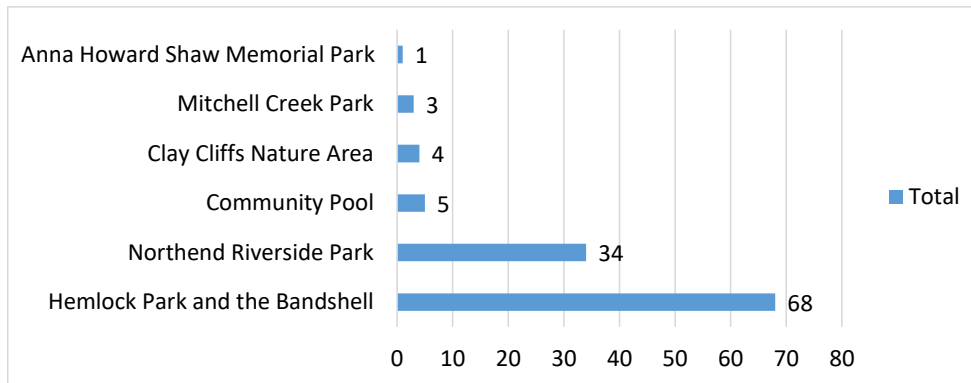


Non-Resident

Which park do you visit most frequently?

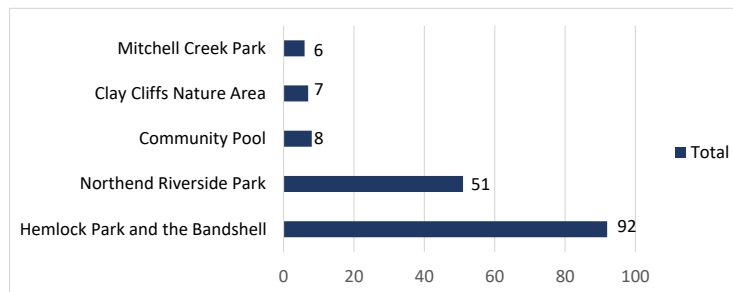


Resident

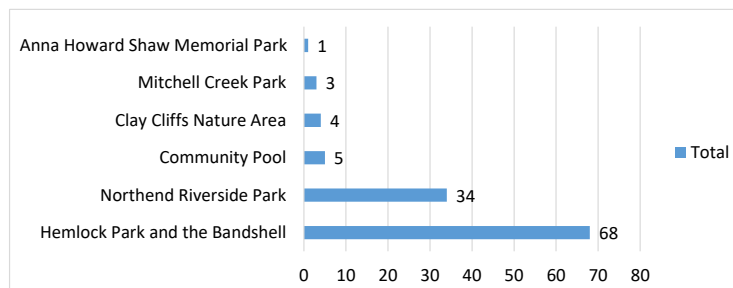


Non-Resident

Which park do you visit most frequently?

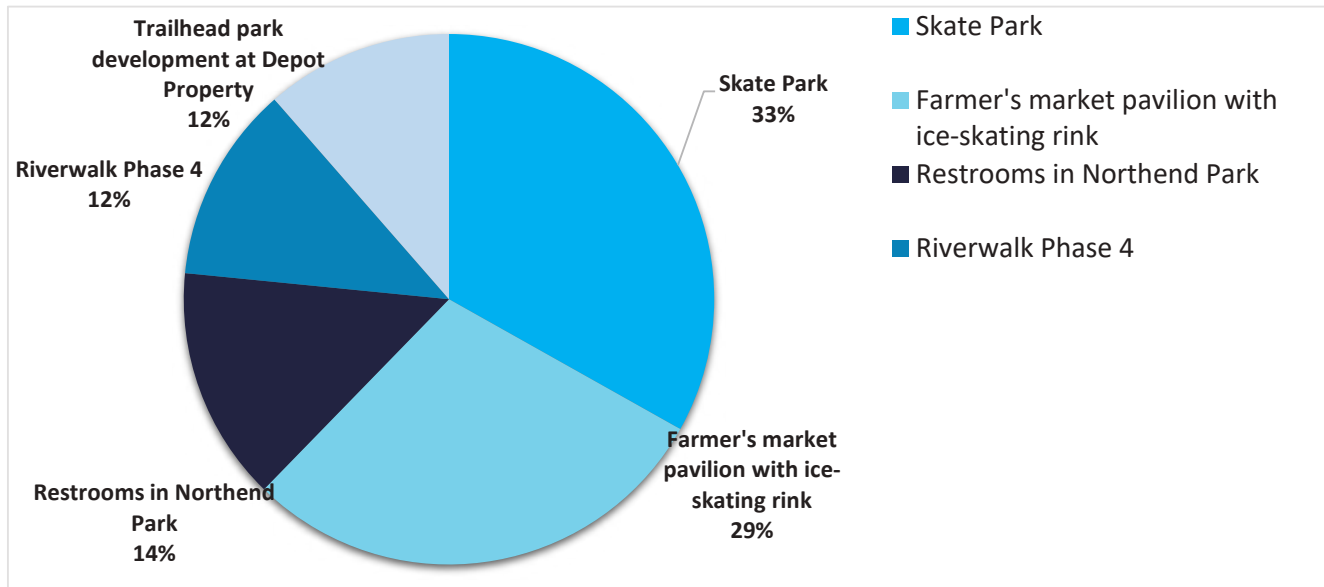


Resident

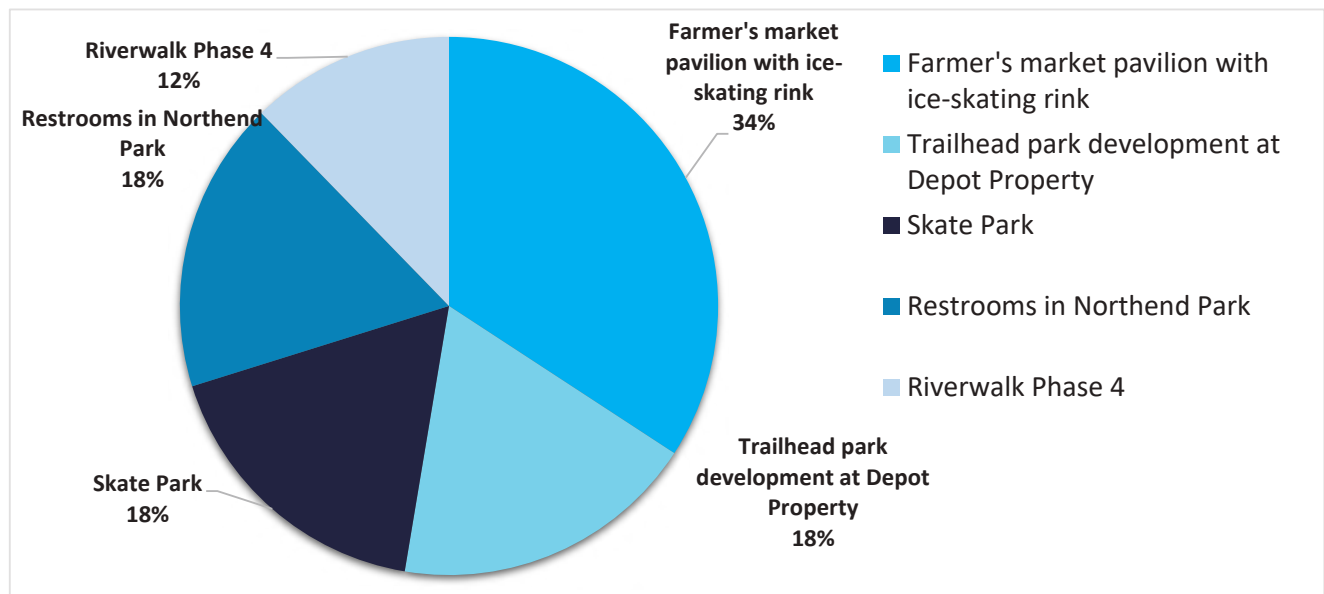


Non-Resident

What initiative should the City of Big Rapids prioritize for future development?

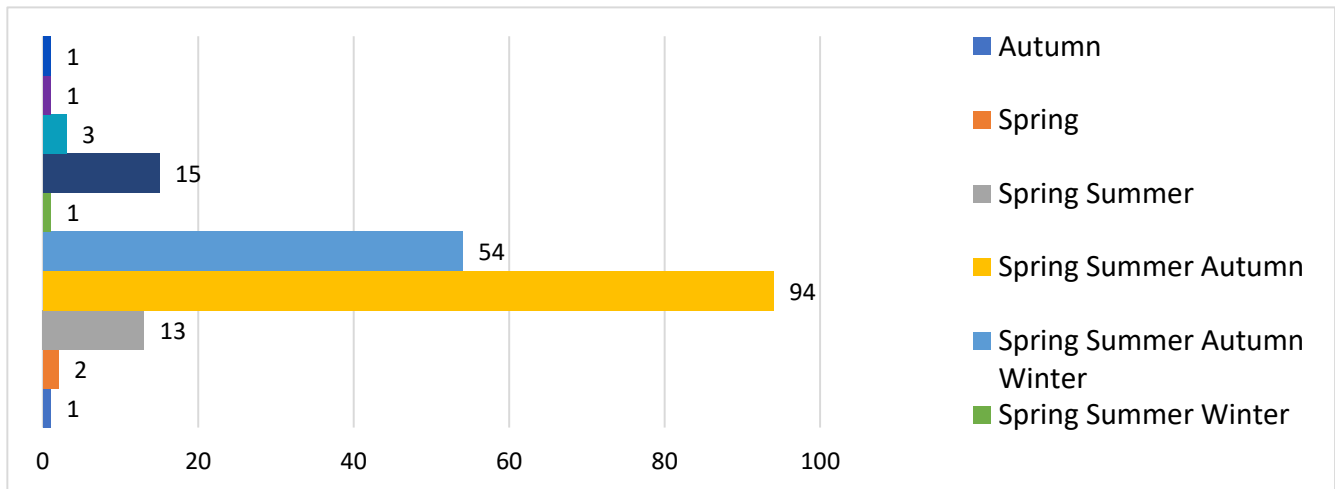


Resident

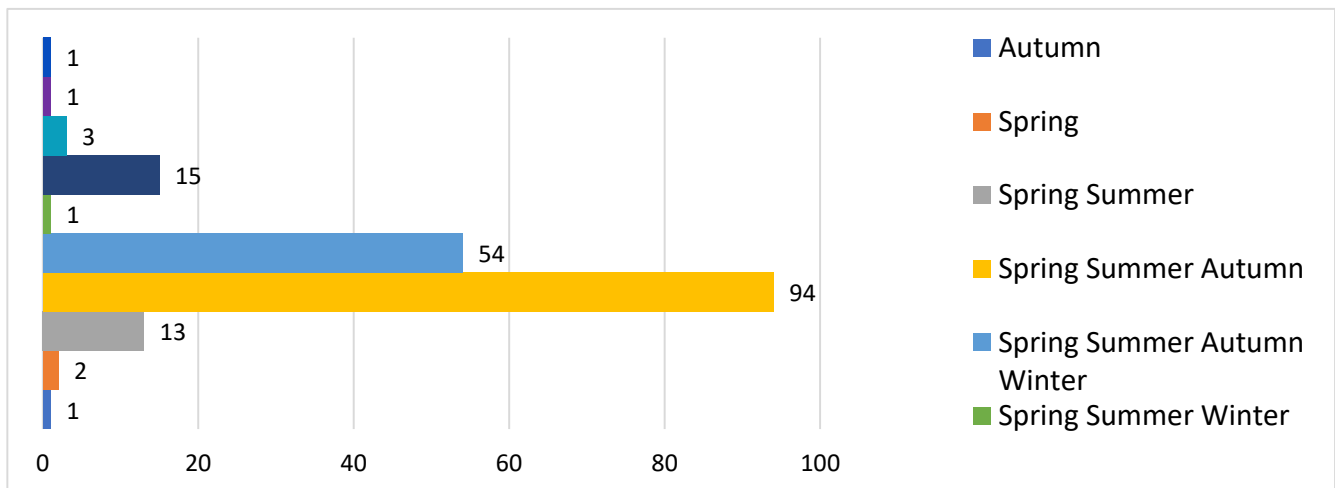


Non-Resident

In what seasons do you visit the parks in the City of Big Rapids? (Check all that apply)



Resident



Non-Resident

Appendix F

Community Workshop Findings

Findings from the Community Workshop

Station 1: Depot Park

Area 1: (Triangle on south of property)

- Pavilion: 17 responses
- Skate Park: 18 responses
- Native Planting Area: 4 responses
- Dog Park - 3 responses

Area 2: (Middle area)

- Firepit: 17 responses
- Restrooms: 14 responses
- Community Garden Plots: 3 responses

Area 3: (Closest to Depot building)

- Restrooms: 22 responses
- Sculpture Park - 6 responses
- Playground - 4 responses

Station 2: Winter Park Activities

Activity	Do you do this activity now?	Would you do this activity in Big Rapids?
Winter Camping	1	3
Winter Disc-golf	2	3
Fat Tire Biking	0	3
Snowmobiling	2	3
Winter Birding	1	2
Cross-country Skiing	7	12
Ice Skating	6	18
Snowshoeing	6	7
Sledding/Winter Tubing	5	15
Downhill Skiing and Snowboarding	9	3

Station 3: Budgeting Activity

Lower Cost Improvements:

- Plant 12 Trees: 26 responses
- Two Benches and a Trash Receptacle: 22 responses
- Two Picnic Tables and a Grill: 19 responses
- New Public Art (Mural or Sculpture) [costs 2 tickets]: 18 responses
- Drinking Fountain: 13 responses
- Ten Community Garden Boxes: 7 responses

Mid Cost Improvements:

- Develop Trails and Signage at Clay Cliffs Nature Area: 18 responses
- Fun Deck Slide at Community Pool: 15 responses
- Kayak launch: 13 responses
- New small pavilion: 10 responses
- Lights at a Softball Field [costs 2 tickets]: 10 responses
- New Dog Park: 6 responses
- New Basketball Courts: 5 responses
- Mountain Bike Track: 4 responses

Higher Cost Improvements:

- Permanent Restrooms at Northend Park - 16 responses
- Skate Park: 12 responses
- Indoor Community Recreation Center [costs 3 tickets]: 8 responses
- Replace Playscape with Modern Playground: 6 responses
- Build Six New Pickleball Courts - 4 responses

Station 4: Future Park Developments

Community Priorities for Future Park Developments

Farmer's Market Pavilion with Ice Skating Rink

- Top Choice: 16 responses
- 2nd Choice: 6 responses
- 3rd Choice: 3 responses
- Last Choice: 2 responses

Skate Park

- Top Choice: 1 response
- 2nd Choice: 8 responses
- 3rd Choice: 4 responses
- 4th Choice: 14 responses

Riverwalk Phase IV

- Top Choice: 3 responses
- 2nd Choice: 7 responses
- 3rd Choice: 11 responses
- 4th Choice: 6 responses

Permanent Restrooms in Northend Park

- Top Choice: 6 responses
- 2nd Choice: 7 responses
- 3rd Choice: 9 responses
- 4th Choice: 5 responses

Where should a Skate Park be located?

Northend Park: 11 responses

Depot Park: 5 responses

Hemlock Park: 3 responses

Other Questions Asked

Clay Cliffs Nature Area:

How do you Use Clay Cliffs Nature Area?

Nature Walks/Hiking: 7 responses

Walk Dog: 1 response

Fishing: 1 response

What Part of the Clay Cliffs Plan should be Developed First?

Entrance Area: 5 responses

Signage on Trails: 3 responses

Bridges over Creek: 2 responses

General comments from participants:

- White Pine State Trail: more benches needed along the trail, additional art, signage connecting the WPST to Northend Riverside Park and the Riverwalk. How can the City work with the MDNR on these things. Also, how to connect WPST to Downtown?
- More designated bike lanes around town!
- New soccer fields are needed for the growing soccer club.
- Recommendation: Skate Park
- Great to have an open event like this and ask me where I want my tax dollars to go and what my family is looking for :)
- Farmer's Market on Saturdays! Big Rapids is not a retirement village, we work.
- Other soccer fields in park areas.
- Lighting on the existing walking paths.
- More people and mowers to maintain the disc-golf course.
- Gender neutral bathrooms for transgender and non-binary folks.
- Downtown sound system for events and Christmas.
- Wayfinding signage: "To Park" and "To Downtown", etc.
- Add more bike repair stations with air pumps.
- Soccer Fields: lighting for fall night practices and games at Industrial Park field, sprinkler system heads need to be replaced, grass seed to fill holes, possibly more fields, goals need repair, need two fields at Industrial Park, need bathrooms at Industrial Park, parking lot at Industrial Park needs the potholes filled, also need more benches at River Street Park.
- More collaboration with county, schools, townships, for more funding and for all existing and future amenities.